



## **Neighbourhood, community and housing in Bradford: building understanding between new and settled groups**

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# Neighbourhood, Community and Housing in Bradford: building understanding between new and settled groups

## Final report to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

November 2010

**This report explores the use of community-based forums to promote shared understanding between new migrants and settled groups around neighbourhood, community and housing issues.**

The arrival of new migrants is commonly understood to bring tensions in community relations, competition for resources and challenges for local service delivery. The Coalition Government's focus on the 'Big Society' suggests that local people should come together to solve neighbourhood problems and build the community they want. This report explores the potential for diverse residents to arrive at common understandings about local problems, needs and solutions.

The report:

- explores new and settled populations' experiences of neighbourhood and community in Bradford;
- evaluates the effectiveness of community forums for inter-cultural engagement and learning;
- identifies areas of commonality and divergence in opinions on housing, neighbourhood and community between new and settled groups; and
- explores the potential for building a shared understanding of ways to improve everyday life.

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# Executive summary

Migration has brought a ‘super-diversity’ of immigrants to settle in many of Britain’s cities and some rural areas, and is likely to act as a driver of change at the neighbourhood scale for some time to come. The arrival of new migrants is commonly understood to bring tensions in community relations, competition for resources such as housing, and challenges for service delivery. The Government, however, has been slow to assist statutory agencies and local communities to manage the challenges raised by this new immigration. The recent Coalition Government’s focus on the ‘Big Society’ agenda suggests that local people should come together to solve neighbourhood problems and build the local community they want. This policy direction is founded upon an assumption that residents can arrive at common understandings about local problems, needs and solutions, build shared visions for a neighbourhood’s future, and work together for the common good.

This report discusses the findings from a research project that brought together new migrants and settled populations living in Bradford in order to explore their experiences of everyday life in the neighbourhood and their views on local housing, neighbourhood and community issues. The research project used different styles of community-based forums, tailored to particular groups and local concerns, as a mechanism for engaging new and settled populations. The aim of the project was:

- to evaluate the effectiveness of community-based forums as a mechanism for inter-cultural community engagement and learning;
- to identify areas of commonality and divergence in opinions on housing, neighbourhood and community issues between the new and settled groups; and
- to identify the potential for building a shared understanding of ways to improve everyday life.

The community-based forums delivered in Bradford provide some insights into how local engagement might be approached in a bid to develop a shared understanding and vision for the future. However, they also point to the issues which arise when local communities are left to themselves to manage the challenges posed by new immigration.

## Key findings

- Forum participants valued the opportunity for discussion and felt it was a worthwhile experience. Women in particular wanted more forums and contact with other groups.
- Asian participants in Bradford’s diverse inner-city areas felt the forums helped them learn more about new Eastern European migrants settling in their neighbourhood, their housing circumstances and the problems they face as new arrivals.
- Young men participating in a forum that used photography as a means of communication valued the opportunity to have their voices heard and responded positively to this mechanism of engagement.

- Interactive community forums can provide opportunities for contact and communication between new and settled residents, thereby helping to encourage neighbourliness. Forums also have the potential to promote learning and understanding between residents with different social and cultural heritages and settlement experiences, and to build bridges between them.
- Forums can help to build shared understandings of problems affecting the local community and neighbourhood, such as anti-social behaviour, but longer-term work may be needed to develop agreement on causes and solutions.
- Forum participants recognised the limits of what could be achieved through a single encounter in a community forum, especially given religious and cultural differences, powerful racial stereotypes, and ongoing racist behaviour in the neighbourhood. Forums are likely to be most effective if embedded within a wider strategic partnership programme to manage neighbourhood change and promote community cohesion that includes 'myth-busting' strategies, challenges to negative discourses on immigration, and policies to address structural inequalities, racist behaviour and social exclusions.
- Forum discussions can help to challenge misunderstandings and negative stereotypes of new and settled groups, and to identify areas of commonality on which to build. It may be unrealistic, however, to expect groups from diverse backgrounds, with differing housing aspirations and needs and varying commitments to the neighbourhood, to agree and collaborate fully on local issues.
- Challenges arise when conducting forums in relation to recruiting new migrants, resources, language barriers, building trust and the potential to reinforce divergent views. Trusted individuals from local communities can play an invaluable role in enabling recruitment and facilitating positive exchanges during the forum. Even when tensions are evident, there are usually areas of commonality on which to build.

## Key messages and policy implications

Interactive forums can provide an important mechanism for engaging new and settled residents, thereby opening up the potential for learning about each other, recognising common interests and developing shared understandings around housing, neighbourhood and community issues. Bridges can be built between new and settled groups but, because of ongoing racism and discourses of 'otherness' at the local and national scales, their foundations may be relatively fragile.

These findings have several policy implications. At the local level:

- Interactive community forums can offer a form of engagement that moves beyond the 'contact hypothesis' underpinning many community cohesion initiatives. They are likely to be most effective if embedded within a strategic partnership programme to manage neighbourhood change and promote cohesion.
- Support is needed to build on settled residents' perceptions of commonalities between themselves and newcomers, and on inter-cultural initiatives proposed by them.
- Groundwork may be needed to help people living in areas of new migration to build a shared understanding about the root of local problems and to develop mutually acceptable solutions. This requires strong local leadership and capacity-building for agencies and community organisations involved in providing support.

- Support is needed for frontline workers, such as neighbourhood wardens and trusted community members, who can act as agents of change.
- Support is also needed for vulnerable groups such as Czech and Slovak Roma.

At the national scale, the entrenched negative discourse on immigration needs to be challenged.



The arrival of new migrants is commonly understood to bring tensions in community relations, competition for resources such as housing, and new pressures on service delivery in neighbourhoods around Britain (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007). This creates very real challenges for the development of stable and cohesive communities, which, despite a decade of ‘community cohesion’ initiatives, have yet to be fully addressed. Governments have been slow to assist statutory agencies and local communities to manage the challenges raised by new immigration. The Labour Government committed to do little other than listen to people’s fears and concerns about the local impacts and consequences of new immigration, to circulate good practice and practical advice about how to manage change, and to allocate £70 million to the Migration Impacts Fund to help manage the short-term pressures on local services across England (Robinson, 2010). The new Coalition Government also appears to have little interest in helping local communities to manage the challenge of new immigration; one of its first acts in government was to end the Migration Impacts Fund.

The Coalition Government’s focus on the ‘Big Society’ agenda suggests that confidence has been placed in the capabilities of local people to come together to solve problems in their area and build the local community they want. This agenda places particular significance on citizens’ active involvement in local decision-making and advocates new forms of participation in service delivery, including co-operative ventures in housing and neighbourhood management. This policy direction is founded upon an assumption that local residents can arrive at common understandings about local problems, needs and solutions, build shared visions for a neighbourhood’s future, and work together for the common good. The assumption may be challenged, however, in areas of considerable social change through new migration, where perceived social and cultural differences between residents can hinder collaboration, and lack of local knowledge, resources and capacity to participate can exclude newer and more vulnerable groups.

This research explored the scope for residents from a diversity of social and cultural backgrounds living in areas of new immigration in Bradford to arrive at shared appreciations of neighbourhood and community priorities and needs. The project brought together new migrants and settled populations living in three areas of the city in order to explore the potential for building agreement on ways to improve everyday life. The project was specifically concerned with exploring the effectiveness of community-led forums as mechanisms for opening channels of communication and promoting learning about other groups as a prerequisite for building understanding, collaboration and co-operation around local issues in the context of rapid social change.

The findings from this research indicate that community-based forums can provide an important mechanism for engaging new and settled residents, opening up the potential for learning about each other, recognising common interests and developing shared awareness of local issues. However, our exploration of neighbourhood concerns, and the process of negotiation around them, suggests that there are significant risks associated with the Government’s shift in emphasis towards local control through its ‘Big Society’ agenda. The potential for successful and inclusive local collaboration could well be undermined by divergent views, the exclusion of newer groups from decision-making and collaborative ventures, a culture of blaming newcomers and other marginal groups (such as single parents) for a neighbourhood’s problems, and social divisions based on perceived religious and cultural difference.

The research findings have several policy implications, which are explored fully in Chapter 6. Notably, groundwork may be needed to help people living in areas of new migration to build a shared

appreciation of the root of local problems and develop mutually acceptable solutions. This will require strong local leadership and capacity building for agencies and community-based organisations involved in providing support and enabling residents to run their neighbourhood and community in an effective and inclusive way.

## National context

Since the 1990s, the UK has witnessed a dramatic rise in the number of people entering and leaving the country. These population flows peaked in 2006, when 591,000 people were recorded as entering the country and net migration totalled 191,000 people (Office for National Statistics, 2006). These new immigrants have been drawn from a far wider range of countries of origin than previous immigration streams into the UK. A distinctive geography of settlement also appears to be associated with this new phase of immigration, many recent arrivals venturing beyond the towns and cities that have traditionally served as destination points for new immigrants to the UK and settling in locations (including small towns and rural areas) with little or no recent history of inward migration.

The scale, nature and scope of this new phase of immigration has the potential to serve as an important driver of change at the neighbourhood level, posing challenges for new immigrants, settled residents, and service providers alike. This fact is evidenced by the numerous initiatives developed in a bid to manage the local consequences of new immigration, profiled in various guidance documents and good practice publications (see, for example: Amas and Crosland, 2006; Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007; Home Office, 2004; Home Office, 2005; ICoCo, 2007; Ipsos MORI, 2007; Perry and Blackaby, 2007; Wilson and Zipfel, 2008; Haque, 2010). The factors reportedly prompting these local initiatives – which have ranged in focus from efforts to promote understanding and tolerance and manage tensions and conflict, through to efforts to improve the relevance and responsiveness of local service provision to a changing local profile of need – provide a glimpse into the local challenges posed by new immigration. These include: concerns about who is getting access to what resources and why; problems encountered by local service providers in the context of rapid population change and increasing diversity and a shifting profile of need; concerns about the material conditions of new residents and their exclusion from key services; and emerging tensions and conflict between new arrivals and settled populations.

It might be presumed that these challenges are likely to subside as the economic downturn dents the enthusiasm of migrant workers to head to the UK and government attempts to manage migration reduce the numbers of asylum seekers and migrant workers entering the country. However, this presumption would be wrong for two reasons. First, the scale of migration to the UK since the 1990s has been such that it is likely to continue to be a driver of change at the local level for many years to come. Second, despite political rhetoric about reducing ‘immigration to the levels of the 1990s – tens of thousands, instead of the hundreds of thousands’ (Conservative Party, 2010), large numbers of migrants will continue to arrive in the UK. The government has no control over the largest migration streams into the UK – EU citizens and returning UK nationals. In addition, the UK will continue to receive and accept people fleeing persecution and some of these people will exercise their right to claim asylum under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees. Finally, no government is likely to turn off the supply of foreign workers, on which the UK economy has become increasingly dependent in recent years, for a flexible workforce and low wage inflation. Some of these people will stay for a short time, others will make Britain their home.

Heated public debate will continue to surround this new phase of immigration, but understanding and knowledge about local experiences and consequences is in short supply. Evidence about the experiences of new immigrants has rarely ventured much beyond description to consider how these experiences are shaped by and inform the localities in which new immigrants are settling (Robinson and Reeve, 2006). Meanwhile, analysis of the consequences of new immigration has tended to focus on the national context and to consider economic costs and benefits, while largely ignoring local experiences, consequences and challenges.

## Bradford context

This project forms part of a wider Bradford programme of research supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. This recognises the community development and service provision challenges arising from a long history of migration and settlement and the difficulties associated with late twentieth-century deindustrialisation. Popular representations of Bradford have all too often emphasised the material deprivation of the city, instances of social unrest (specifically in 1995 and 2001) and a fractured community rooted in the 'parallel lives' of Asian and white Bradfordians. However, others have presented a much more positive picture, depicting Bradford as a multicultural city that, despite real challenges, is coming of age (Alam, 2008; McLoughlin, 2006).

In recent years, a new stream of migration has brought households with a diversity of origins, transnational connections, immigration statuses, social rights/entitlements and circumstances to live alongside established South Asian, black, European and other groups in selected areas of Bradford. The new migrants include a diversity of asylum seekers and post-2004 Eastern European economic migrants from Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics (including Roma) and Latvia. These groups have been particularly drawn to the inner-city neighbourhoods that provide a strong community base for the Asian population, but they have also settled, in smaller numbers, in a range of outer estates. The diverse groups of new migrants occupy a special position in Bradford's housing market and their arrival has disrupted conventional understandings of migrant housing needs and pathways that were based on established black and minority ethnic groups. This clearly poses new challenges for policy-makers and housing providers as well as those concerned with neighbourliness and community relations.

Our research began by consulting a wide range of local stakeholders about the impact of this recent phase of new migration on Bradford's neighbourhoods. More than 20 interviews were conducted with strategic policy-makers, people involved in service delivery, and community development workers. We also had informal conversations with neighbourhood wardens working to support new migrants and settled groups. They raised a number of housing, neighbourhood and community concerns:

- New migrants' poor housing conditions – the poor housing conditions, hidden homelessness and sometimes negative experiences of new migrants to Bradford today have many parallels with those of South Asian migrants to Bradford in the 1960s. Many Eastern European migrants, including families with children, live in overcrowded, unfit private rental accommodation. Homelessness, and hidden homelessness, appears to be a growing issue amongst young Eastern European men, but help for them is limited.
- Neighbourhood tensions and quality of life – concerns about anti-social behaviour, such as the dumping of rubbish and young people's behaviour, cut across settled and new groups, but are sometimes racialised. Particular tensions arise in the inner areas of Bradford between settled Muslim Asian residents and new migrants over alcohol consumption in the streets and perceived intimidation of Muslim women by young men. There is also evidence of street tensions between groups of young Asian and Eastern European men, some of which is drug related. Some of our informants had observed 'Asian flight' from certain streets where new migrants have congregated. Meanwhile, new migrants can feel marginalised when trying to settle in close-knit, well-established communities, whether in the inner city or on outer estates.
- Uncertainty over the capacity (and willingness) of housing providers to respond to the new diversity – the pace of change, lack of accurate information on the newly arriving groups, insensitive ethnic monitoring categories and lack of translation services hamper the capacity of housing and other service providers to respond to the needs of new migrants. Some providers also appear more reticent to embrace the new diversity than others. Community-based support varies across localities. This

appears to be much better developed in the traditional immigrant reception areas of the inner city than in the newer zones of settlement that are less used to coping with cultural diversity.

- Community engagement and the politics of representation – service providers state their commitment to ‘community engagement’, but this has different meanings for different organisations. A lesson drawn from a review of current practice at the national scale (see Chapter 1) is that some voices may not easily be heard. Given language difficulties and a lack of leadership and political representation, new migrant groups do not appear to be widely consulted on local housing, neighbourhood and community issues.
- Structural constraints – poverty, associated with low-paid work, worklessness and restricted welfare entitlements, is likely to shape many new migrants’ housing careers and everyday neighbourhood experiences. Disadvantage is compounded by the finding that benefits advice offered to new migrants can be inconsistent, contradictory and partial.

This research project specifically addressed the concerns of local community development groups and service providers about community tensions, lack of consultation and the marginalisation of Bradford’s new migrants in some neighbourhoods by bringing together new and settled residents to discuss neighbourhood issues. Despite some evidence of tensions, previous research indicates that many residents from diverse backgrounds do hold common visions for their neighbourhood, share many of the same concerns, and express similar aspirations for ‘community’ (Hudson, *et al.*, 2007; Phillips, *et al.*, 2008). Our research focused on the effectiveness of interactive forums in bringing together new and established population groups, with different cultural heritages and settlement histories, to work together constructively in a bid to explore and narrow differences and build some consensus around local concerns.

## Research aims and methods

The key aims of this research project were:

- to evaluate the effectiveness of community-based forums as a mechanism for inter-cultural community engagement and learning;
- to identify areas of commonality and divergence in opinions on housing, neighbourhood and community issues between the new and settled groups; and
- to identify the potential for building a shared understanding of ways to improve everyday life.

The specific objectives associated with the delivery of the forums included exploring the potential of the forum approach:

- to facilitate the meaningful engagement of different parties with a vested interest in housing and neighbourhood futures;
- to give people the chance to be heard and to listen to others;
- to enhance the understanding of participants and build bridges between them;
- to promote co-operation, rather than confrontation; and
- to generate constructive and creative suggestions and priorities.

The project began with a review of national evidence regarding local initiatives developed in response to the challenges raised by new immigration. This evidence base was not able to shed much light on the effectiveness of different forms of community-driven engagement. Nationally, community engagement appears to be more heavily weighted towards consultation than collaboration and co-operation. The project also tested the effectiveness of interactive forums as a vehicle for 'mutual learning', community building and building foundations for collaboration between new and settled residents. The use of an inclusive, participatory research methodology was central to this project. Participatory action research has the potential to engage local people in the research process, share knowledge with them, and enhance their understanding of local issues through research (Pain and Francis, 2003). Khan and Berkeley (2007) argue that participation can foster civil integration by opening up new dialogues between diverse groups.

## Defining new migrants

This research adopted a wide definition of new migrants, which included people migrating for reasons of asylum, work, education and marriage (half of Bradford's South Asian population marry someone from abroad). The early stages of consultation for this project (see Chapter 2) sought to engage with a wide range of new migrants. In the later stages of the research, we elected to focus on particular groups of new migrants. This was in response to key issues emerging from the consultation period, which highlighted the focus of tensions/potential gaps in understanding for particular groups (for example, the post-2004 influx of Eastern European migrants was a particular focus of concern in inner Bradford); as well as the salience of housing, neighbourhood and community issues for new migrant families settling in Bradford rather than single labour migrants (for example, some Polish economic migrants) who were more likely to regard their stay in Bradford as temporary.

This focused particular attention on Filipino migrant families living on an outer estate of Allerton/Lower Grange, and Slovak/Czech Roma migrants in inner Bradford. The latter are more likely to experience discrimination and be perceived as 'outsiders' by established groups (and some service providers) than, for example, Polish migrants.

## Research localities

The uneven pattern of new migration to Bradford, as elsewhere, places the challenges of integration on particular neighbourhoods. Three localities experiencing new migration were selected for this research; two areas with an established history of contact with migrants and one new contact zone.

## Established contact zones of immigration

The two inner-city areas of West Bowling and Manningham/Girlington have a long history of immigration and new migrant settlement, which has placed new demands on the ageing housing stock and brought challenges for community relations. The areas are characterised by settled Asian, white and black populations as well as a diversity of new Eastern European migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Earlier work (Phillips, 2006; Phillips, *et al.*, 2007) has indicated that despite some outward movement of younger and more affluent households, Asian families have strong attachments to their community bases in inner Bradford. This can lead to a tendency to defend what are seen as safe Muslim spaces in the light of a perceived threat from newcomers of a different religious and cultural heritage.

The West Bowling area is home to a cluster of Slovakian and Czech Roma families that face particular housing and settlement challenges because of their relatively large family size, their 'visible difference' compared with Polish migrants (they can be mistaken for Asian people), and their intention to settle permanently in Bradford. They currently receive day-to-day support from a Slovakian neighbourhood warden, who offers help and advice that goes well beyond the remit of her job description. However, as



our stakeholder interviews and a focus group discussion indicated, engaging with the local population, employers and service providers outside this area can be more challenging because of prejudice, language barriers and limited mainstreaming of provision for this group. Polish translators may be the only ones on offer to these migrants.

The housing tenure in these areas is mixed, although there is a high level of home ownership amongst the Asian population. In 2001, the tenure mix in Little Horton (that includes West Bowling) was: 54% owner-occupation, 28% social rental and 18% private rental. In Manningham/Girlington it was: 51% owner-occupation, 28% social rental and 21% private rental. Owner-occupation here is lower than in Bradford as a whole (72%). There is a wide range of statutory and third sector organisations and services which offer support and advice to new and settled groups here, although funding is often precarious.

## New contact zone of immigration

The Allerton/Lower Grange is a peripheral estate comprising mainly social housing with a predominantly white population. Recent migrants to the area include Filipinos, recruited to work in the NHS from 2000–2003, a diversity of refugees and Eastern European migrant workers. Bradford's Asian households are purchasing good quality housing in the south of this area, but appear to be more oriented in their daily lives towards the nearby Asian population and community facilities of Manningham than the Allerton/Lower Grange estate. Community support is available through two neighbourhood centres, but these are mostly used by white residents. Filipinos are more likely to seek support through their own church and community centre.

## Conclusion

There has been a recent shift within British urban policy towards community participation and empowerment (see Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006, 2007, 2008) that has been reinvigorated by the Coalition Government's focus on 'Big Society' and active citizenship (Cabinet Office, 2010). This envisages a move in emphasis from state to local control by engaging local communities in decision-making, building local capacity, and empowering residents to achieve greater influence over their lives. At the local level, community engagement and voluntary sector involvement have been key criteria for the accreditation of Local Strategic Partnerships and the 'Sustainable Community Strategy' embedded in Bradford Metropolitan District Council's *2020 Vision*. *The Big Plan (2008–11)* and *Big Plan 2 (2011–14)* seek to consult with and engage Bradford's diverse communities.

There is much debate, however, over what might constitute effective forms of engagement and active citizenship. In seeking to implement engagement through community forums in Bradford, we are mindful of Temple and Steele's (2004) argument that there are many pitfalls which can lead to 'injustices of engagement'. They highlight the challenges associated with:

- the way in which 'communities' are constructed by, and acknowledged by, policy-makers – a JRF report (Blake, *et al.*, 2008) argues, for example, that the previous Labour Government's community engagement and community cohesion programmes developed in parallel, often neglecting new arrivals;
- accessing 'hard-to-reach' groups and establishing whose voices are heard – women and young people, for example, are often overlooked;
- the role of community 'representatives' acting as gatekeepers.

Our aim has been to consult widely with residents as well as community representatives, to engage a diverse range of new migrants and settled groups, and to include those whose voices are rarely heard. We succeeded in engaging two groups who are widely regarded as 'hard to reach': young men from migrant

and Asian backgrounds, and Czech/Slovakian Roma newcomers to Bradford. Four interactive forums were conducted with new and settled groups living in our three research localities. In the two inner areas with a long history of ethnic diversity, established white, black and Asian residents were brought together with Slovakian and Czech new migrants. In the new zone of ethnic diversity and contact, established white residents engaged in a forum with more recent Filipino migrants to the area.

This report begins with a national review of available evidence on the delivery of local initiatives designed to manage the challenges of new immigration. Chapter 2 outlines our approach to a period of consultation through the use of a mobile poster forum that enabled new and settled residents to help set the agenda for the interactive forums. Chapter 3 discusses the effectiveness of the design of two different styles of interactive forum: one-off discussion forums and a photography project ending in a discussion forum.

In Chapter 4 we report on the forums as mechanisms for learning about other groups and in Chapter 5 we consider their effectiveness as a mechanism for building shared understanding. In Chapter 6 we reflect on the outcomes, transferable lessons and policy implications of this research. In this we highlight the positive response of forum participants to participation and inter-cultural engagement through forums, and the value of forums for providing opportunities for contact and communication between new and settled groups. We examine their potential to promote learning and understanding between diverse groups that can form 'communities of place', but also point to the fragility of bridges built between new and settled groups in a climate of local tensions, racist harassment and national discourses on the negative impact of immigration.

# 1 Meeting the challenges of immigration at the local scale: review of the national evidence

## Introduction

Policy-makers have been slow to recognise the fact that new immigration has the potential to drive a process of rapid change at the neighbourhood level, raising challenges for local agencies responsible for resourcing and delivering services, intensifying competition for scarce resources among local residents, and contributing to rising tensions and 'cohesion challenges'. Little guidance has been issued about how local agencies should set about understanding and responding to these challenges. Despite this, a string of local initiatives has sprung up across the country with the express intent of managing the challenges raised by new immigration. Many organisations, both statutory and third sector, have been forced to respond swiftly to pressing concerns instigated by rapid social change, often leaving little time for evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives.

This chapter examines the results emerging from a review of available evidence regarding the delivery of these local initiatives, which aimed to highlight insights or lessons that might guide this study. The chapter is divided into four key sections:

- 'The search for good practice' reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence base and the limits of the lessons that can be drawn.
- An 'Overview of local initiatives' reviews the form, focus and delivery mechanisms associated with the local initiatives developed to manage local challenges raised by new immigration.
- 'Emerging lessons' draws out some tentative lessons from available evidence.
- The 'Conclusion' draws out the key lessons from the review and gaps in knowledge and understanding that this study has sought to fill.

## The search for good practice

The review process drew on evidence from a range of sources, including government guidance and related documentation, knowledge management websites, good practice publications and evaluation reports. This was supplemented by information gathered through a brief email survey of relevant agencies, organisations and individuals, which requested details and evidence about particular initiatives worthy of closer attention. Information about specific initiatives was also gathered through web searches and direct contact.

The various community cohesion guidance documents, good practice outputs and information sources that have emerged since 2001 proved to be a rich source of information about local initiatives set up in response to challenges posed by new immigration. Many of the case studies detailed in the report by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion (2007), for example, focus on local cohesion challenges raised by new immigration. These include initiatives relating to a range of issues (including education and employment) and a variety of population groups (women, older people, young people). Research reports and web-based information sources focusing on the integration of new immigrants (for example, the Opening Doors project web resource at <http://hact.org.uk/opening-doors-publications>) were another useful source of information.



Reviewing these various sources, it soon became apparent that it was going to be difficult to glean specific insights of relevance from this evidence base. Information about local initiatives was found typically to take the form of short vignettes, which describe but make no effort to evaluate the effectiveness or efficiency of interventions. Indeed, it appears that the vast majority of interventions profiled in various guidance documents or good practice publications have not been subject to any form of evaluation. There is little or no evidence of attempts to examine the context, inputs, strategies or methodologies of initiatives (formative evaluation). Nor does much effort appear to have been put into assessing the outputs and associated costs and benefits of the numerous activities targeted at meeting the challenges raised by new immigration (summative evaluation).

It is inevitable, when policy-makers are faced with a new challenge, that initial responses rely more on intuition than advice rooted in evaluation of what works, where, why and when. With time, however, it might be assumed that an evidence base about what constitutes effective practice will emerge. So far, this has not been the case with regard to management of the local consequences and cohesion challenges posed by new immigration, perhaps due to pressure of work and possibly reflecting a lack of resources and expertise available in many smaller organisations. Community cohesion guidance documents and reports, in particular, often refer to specific examples as good practice, despite a lack of evidence to substantiate this conclusion. Such claims are then reinforced by repeated references to these case studies as examples of good practice in other reports and guidance documents.

In response to these weaknesses in the evidence base, this review concentrated on drawing tentative lessons from the small number of local initiatives that have been subjected to more detailed or robust analysis (if not evaluation). Key sources consulted included:

- Amas, N. and Crosland, B. (2006) *Understanding the Stranger: Building bridges community handbook* – a showcasing of 21 projects from across the UK aiming to mediate tension and build bridges between new residents (refugee and asylum seekers) and settled populations.
- Harris, M. and Young, P. (2009) 'Developing Community and Social Cohesion through Grassroots Bridge-Building: An Exploration' – a paper presenting the findings from a study exploring bridge-building activities in community-level projects working with people from different ethnic, faith and nationality groups.
- HACT / Chartered Institute of Housing (2009) *Opening Doors* – a web-based resource that includes a review of recent studies and reports about national and local programmes and projects working with new migrants.
- Perry, J. and Blackaby, B. (2007) *Community Cohesion and Housing: a good practice guide* – guidance containing numerous examples drawn from a range of resources, including various research reports.
- Wilson, M. and Zipfel, T. (2008) *Communities R Us: new and established communities working together* – end of programme evaluation report of a HACT-funded programme involving local initiatives in Bolton, Manchester and Wakefield, designed to bring refugees, asylum seekers and settled residents together to promote integration and good neighbourliness.

## Overview of local initiatives

The vast majority of the local initiatives developed in a bid to manage the local consequences of new immigration and the cohesion challenges wrought by rapid population change have attended to at least one of five priorities:

- community development – capacity building across the local population, with a common theme being the promotion of self-determination;
- promoting understanding – increasing appreciation and understanding between different groups, often involving a two-way exchange, for example, between new arrivals and settled populations;
- responsive local services – promoting greater understanding and responsiveness among local service providers to the requirements of new immigrants and the consequences of their arrival for long-standing residents;
- integration support – advice and assistance for newcomers in a bid to help them better understand and live in their new neighbourhood, access key services and seek work; and
- managing tensions – mediating between different groups and resolving emerging conflicts, including harassment.

Initiatives have rarely been pro-active interventions intended to prevent or limit the challenges raised by new immigration, although there were some examples of forward thinking, such as the Northfields Tenants Association in Leicester, which worked to prepare local residents for the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees into the area (see Perry and Blackaby, 2007). More commonly, initiatives were developed in response to the emergence of a combination of local challenges that could be classified into four categories:

- concerns among settled residents about who is getting access to what resources and why, and related concerns about losing out to new residents;
- local services struggling to cope in context of rapid population change and increasing diversity and shifting profile of need;
- concerns about the material conditions of new residents and their exclusion from provision by key services; and
- emerging tensions and conflict between new arrivals and settled populations, informed by all of the above.

These challenges often became apparent as a result of a particular incident or series of events. Different events appear to have prompted different responses. To summarise:

- Community development initiatives – efforts to promote understanding and attempts to manage tensions between different groups – were frequent responses to a rising tide of racist sentiment in an area (manifest in graffiti, abuse, harassment, violence and far-right activity) or inter-group tensions and unrest.
- Integration support targeted at helping new immigrants and/or migrant workers understand and live in their new neighbourhood was often prompted by a concern to minimise behaviour that might put a strain on relations with settled residents (for example, informing new residents about arrangements for disposing of household rubbish).
- Integration support targeted at helping new immigrants access key services was frequently prompted by emerging evidence of the material deprivations experienced by new immigrant households.

- Projects seeking to improve the relevance and responsiveness of local services were prompted by evidence of the material deprivations encountered by some new immigrants and the realisation among service providers that they were increasingly out of touch with the requirements of a local population that had changed rapidly as a result of new immigration.

The incidents prompting these responses frequently occurred in combination. There were, therefore, many examples of initiatives seeking to respond to multiple challenges through a mixed methods approach.

Table 1 provides an overview of the leadership and delivery of local initiatives across the five realms of activity (community development, promoting understanding, responsive local services, integration support and managing tensions). Key insights to be drawn from the evidence regarding delivery include:

- Leadership – most initiatives were led or co-ordinated by statutory agencies or service providers. In particular, initiatives designed to promote more responsive local services, integration support and manage tensions were typically led or co-ordinated by service providers. Community leadership was more to the fore in initiatives focused on community development.
- Community involvement – resident or community involvement appeared to be more to the fore in locally targeted initiatives. These included efforts to manage tensions and promote understanding, schemes to help new residents to settle into a neighbourhood and capacity building activities. Resident involvement was typically exercised through community groups, raising familiar questions about representativeness and inclusion. Initiatives working across a wider geographical area – including efforts to promote more responsive local services and provide integration support – tended to engage with communities of interest (for example, refugee-led organisations) rather than communities of place. The role of community groups within partnership arrangements was difficult to establish, leaving unanswered questions about whether participation was an exercise in informing and placating local residents or they were genuine partners involved in decision-making. Many initiatives were non-participatory, in that local residents received a service designed to inform or educate.
- Resident consultation – consultation with local residents had a place in many initiatives, often in a bid to sensitise interventions. While there were some examples of rigorous consultation exercises, consultation often appeared to involve little more than discussions with community groups or the co-opting of community ‘leaders’ onto committees or advisory boards.
- Audience – initiatives providing integration support tended to focus, unsurprisingly, on new immigrants, although there were examples of initiatives making advice and support available to all local residents in an attempt to minimise concerns about unequal treatment. Efforts to promote understanding, meanwhile, often focused on established residents who might be struggling with the ongoing process of change in their neighbourhood.
- Lifespan – most of the initiatives were one-off, short term interventions implemented in a particular geographical location and aimed at ameliorating the immediate challenges raised by new immigration. It is not clear whether this approach reflects conscious design or funding realities.
- Mainstreaming – initiatives have, in general, been delivered as standalone activities, independent of mainstream service provision. This would appear to reflect an assumption that the challenges posed by new immigration are localised in scope and temporary in nature. Few initiatives appear to have any discernible relationship with strategic decision-making at the local authority, regional or national levels.

**Table 1: Overview of local initiative leadership, delivery and engagement**

Realm of activity	Aims	Audience	Leadership and delivery	Form of citizen engagement	Illustrative examples
<b>Community development</b>	Capacity building across the local population	All residents (new and settled)	Community groups, in some cases prompted and supported by local service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some examples of resident responsibility and leadership</li> <li>Some examples of residents involved in decision-making, often through partnerships between statutory agencies and community groups</li> <li>Residents are often the recipients of the initiative (e.g. promotion of shared notions of community futures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Priming and development of local organisations or associations</li> <li>Creation of community or interest groups as a point of contact and information for service providers</li> <li>Shared participation in community events</li> <li>Community leadership training</li> <li>Whole community planning for regeneration</li> </ul>
<b>Promoting understanding</b>	Increasing appreciation and understanding between different groups	All residents, although often focused on settled residents	Statutory and voluntary and community sector agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residents are recipients of the initiative and the aim is to educate participants, often pursued through cross-community participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sports, community arts, craft and cooking projects bringing together new and settled residents and providing an opportunity for dialogue and exchange</li> <li>Refugee presentations and performances to local community groups, schools etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Responsive local services</b>	Promoting greater understanding and responsiveness among local service providers	Local service providers and statutory agencies	Local authorities, working in partnership with other agencies (e.g. police) and in some cases with voluntary and community agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding resident problems and challenges through surveys, meetings and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Networking and information sharing between service providers and new population groups</li> <li>Survey work and interviews to understand the scale and nature of problems and challenges</li> <li>Dedicated link workers to reach out to new populations</li> </ul>
<b>Integration support</b>	Providing advice and assistance for new residents to help them 'fit in' and settle into the neighbourhood	Focused on new residents	Typically led and delivered by local services, although some examples of community groups leading or engaged in planning and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some examples of resident leadership, often through community-led agencies</li> <li>Focus often on informing people about services and opportunities – one-way flow of information from service provider to residents</li> <li>Residents are recipients of the initiative and the aim is to educate them</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information packs for new immigrants</li> <li>Rights and responsibilities information</li> <li>Tenancy support for new immigrants moving into locations with little history of accommodating diversity and difference</li> <li>Introducing new and settled residents</li> <li>Volunteering and work experience opportunities for new arrivals</li> </ul>
<b>Managing tensions</b>	Mediating between different groups and resolving emerging conflicts	New and settled residents	Statutory agencies, sometimes working in partnership with community groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The aim is to educate participants (e.g. through mediation)</li> <li>Community groups sometimes assist with planning, decision-making and delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparatory work with existing residents prior to the arrival of new immigrants</li> <li>Myth-busting activities</li> <li>Improvements in reporting and monitoring of racist incidents</li> <li>Mediation to resolve tensions between new and settled residents</li> </ul>

## Emerging lessons

The key messages to emerge from the review can be summarised under five headings:

### Neighbourhood focus

A neighbourhood focus is important for projects seeking to promote understanding, manage tensions, provide particular aspects of integration support and forge a shared sense of community and purpose through community development. The benefits of neighbourhood-based initiatives can be more immediate and visible to local people and there is a greater likelihood of more positive relationships emerging if people are encountering fellow participants or partnership members on a regular basis in and around the neighbourhood. However, working at the neighbourhood level can have its drawbacks, including difficulties with breaking down insularity and the limited availability of resources.

### Leadership

It is important to have a lead organisation that can carry out the role of accountable body. This organisation should be local and trusted, have a real stake in the project and a commitment to working with others. This organisation should be willing to support local residents to take on responsibility and ownership of the project, but also willing to intervene to ensure the project remains focused on its objectives and remains inclusive.

### Partnership working

The involvement of a respected local organisation from outside the neighbourhood can help overcome tensions associated with the role and function of different local groups within the process. However, local partners (service providers and community-led agencies and groups) have a key role to play informing the planning, development and implementation of locally targeted initiatives. Partnership working can help provide continuity of purpose after the initiative ends, allowing small-scale projects to punch above their weight and have a long-term legacy. To this end, initiatives should be carefully positioned alongside other projects and programmes run by statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector agencies.

### Community engagement

The presence of a strong, trusted, inclusive and open community group or neighbourhood association with a commitment to work across the local population can be the difference between success and failure or between modest impacts and significant, long-lasting achievement. Supporting the development of a local community or resident organisation can represent an initiative in itself.

It is important to recognise that without support and assistance some individuals and groups will remain unable or unwilling to get involved. The recruitment of community link workers can prove a productive approach to increasing participation, as can the employment of creative forms of engagement, including sport and community arts activities.

### Development and delivery

Local initiatives need to know the local population and appreciate local problems, aspirations and hopes. Preparatory work should include attention to resident views and opinions, as well as situations and circumstances, for example, garnered through surveys, interviews and focus groups. The advertising and presentation of an initiative and related activities, the time and place of activities and events, forms of

engagement and the ways that events are run can all impact on the willingness of different sections of the local population to get involved.

## Conclusion

There are many interesting and important local initiatives being implemented in response to the local challenges posed by new immigration. However, there are a number of gaps in understanding and knowledge related to managing the impact of migration on the neighbourhood and the effectiveness of community-driven approaches that this study seeks to fill:

- The importance of evaluation – the evaluation of local initiatives developed in response to challenges raised by new immigration has been, at best, light touch. Limited resources and the need to respond quickly to rapid change means that we often know little about the specifics of interventions implemented in response to the local challenges posed by new arrivals. Key questions relating to the effectiveness of different approaches, demonstrable effects and net consequences go largely unanswered. It is therefore difficult to draw any robust conclusions about what approaches are likely to provide the most efficient and effective response in which circumstances. This study therefore adopted a rigorous approach to evaluation, so that lessons could be learnt and shared more widely.
- Looking beyond the ‘here and now’ – local initiatives have focused on managing the immediate consequences of new immigration. This focus on the ‘here and now’ has diverted attention away from consideration of household, community or neighbourhood futures – including housing requirements and aspirations – and more intractable problems of deprivation and unmet needs. This study therefore ventured into relatively uncharted territory by seeking to look beyond the immediate consequences of new immigration and consider material deficits and aspirations for the future among new and settled residents.
- Engagement and participation – the evidence base provides few lessons about ‘what works’ in terms of community-driven approaches. Many initiatives were non-participatory, in that local residents received a service designed to inform or educate. In cases where participation was reported, it was sometimes difficult to establish whether this was little more than an exercise in informing (and placating) local residents or a genuine attempt to involve residents as partners in decision-making. This project provided an opportunity to fill some of these gaps in understanding about the effectiveness of different approaches to engagement and participation when bringing together and working with new and settled residents. One important gap to be filled was the question of how to overcome the common injustices of engagement, including: who is recognised; who is included; and how they are engaged (Temple and Steele, 2004). To this end, attention to the effectiveness of different modes of participation and engagement was an integral part of this study.



## 2 Approaching engagement – consultation and agenda setting through poster forums

### Introduction

Our review of the national evidence indicates that the process of community engagement in areas of new migration is commonly shaped by the opinions and perspectives of stakeholders and community leaders. While these are important, we wished to counterbalance this perspective with an understanding of residents' views on local housing, neighbourhood and community change. We thus integrated a period of community consultation into our research design. This enabled new and settled residents to help set the agenda for the interactive forums through their identification and confirmation of key issues and potential ways forward.

This chapter discusses our approach to community consultation through the use of a mobile poster forum and the findings from this. Fourteen poster sessions were conducted across a range of venues in the three Bradford research localities of West Bowling, Manningham/Girlington and Allerton/Lower Grange, and 171 residents from diverse backgrounds were consulted. The consultation allowed us to pinpoint areas of mutual concern as well as potential areas of competition and conflict over housing and neighbourhood resources. It also revealed instances of both communality and community tensions that were then explored further in focus groups.

The key findings explored in this chapter are:

- Poster forums proved to be an effective means of community consultation. Drugs, crime, anti-social behaviour, safety and neighbourliness were of mutual concern across new and settled groups in all three areas.
- Many settled residents in the inner areas perceived new migration to be a defining feature of neighbourhood change, bringing benefits and challenges for community relations.
- Some settled groups living in inner areas attributed neighbourhood decline and a rise in anti-social behaviour (especially by young men) to the negative impact of new migration on the area.
- Community tensions, which sometimes spilled over into overt conflict between young Asian and Slovakian/Czech men, emerged as an issue of concern for some. Recent Eastern European migrant men and women recounted experiences of harassment.

### Method

The consultation process was facilitated by the use of a large, eye-catching portable poster (2 metres high) which posed six questions about community change (see Figure 1). The questions were translated into the most commonly used languages locally (French, Polish, Urdu, Czech and Hindi). The impact of new migration was not specifically raised so as not to lead the participants' responses.

The poster was displayed in a diverse range of community centres at times of heavy usage and staffed by two multi-lingual researchers, assisted by volunteers with other language skills. Particular

**Figure 1: Community consultation poster**



efforts were also made to access ‘hard-to-reach’ new migrants, such as refugee women, through specialist organisations and by building contacts through attending community events.

The poster was effective in attracting people’s attention and acted as a catalyst for conversation. Residents’ views on neighbourhood and community change were recorded alongside basic demographic data, length of residence in the area and housing tenure.

## Reflections on the methodology

The poster forums proved to be an effective means of engagement. The method was quick, it took place in territory familiar to the residents, it engaged a wide range of people, and was efficient – the process of engagement captured residents visiting the centre for other purposes. The method successfully identified a number of key housing, neighbourhood and community concerns that would inform the design of the interactive forums.

There are, nevertheless, some unavoidable limitations to this method of engagement. The conversations took place in a public space with strangers, which may have inhibited some people from commenting fully on sensitive issues such as community tensions and racism. Several people, for example, indicated that they were worried about being labelled as ‘racist’ if they made negative comments about other ethnic groups. Some people may also have felt uncomfortable about revealing their true feelings about the impact of new migration in a brief encounter with strangers.

The poster consultation was good at highlighting key local concerns across a wide range of residents, but it did not present the opportunity to explore these matters in depth. Focus groups were thus convened with residents from the main settled and new populations to build on the poster forum findings. These confirmed the key housing, neighbourhood and community issues and enhanced our understanding of them. Insights gained from the focus group discussion also proved helpful for contextualising some of the comments made by new and settled groups engaging in the interactive forums at a later stage.



## Poster forum and focus groups findings

### Areas of mutual concern across new and settled groups

Concerns about drugs, crime, anti-social behaviour and safety were uppermost in people's minds in all of the areas. Inner-city residents also commented on the apparent failures of private and social landlords to maintain/repair properties and about the poor state of the physical environment in some localities. Women from both new and settled groups voiced common aspirations for a safe and friendly residential neighbourhood for themselves and their children.

### Neighbourhood change

Many settled residents in the inner areas perceived new migration to be a defining feature of neighbourhood change. In West Bowling, this was often described in neutral terms, although some referred to 'white flight', neighbourhood decline and disharmony. Settled groups were particularly concerned about a rise in anti-social behaviour (especially by young men), which some attributed to new migrants in their area. Some Asian and white residents of West Bowling specifically remarked that, in their view, there were 'too many' Slovaks in the area.

The views of settled Asian residents in the Manningham/Girlington area were less tolerant of recent neighbourhood change. Whilst some voiced empathy for the plight of new arrivals ("It's probably the same as when we moved in." (Asian man)), more offered a negative assessment of the impact of new migration on the area and community. As indicated by the comments below, noise, dirt, threat to people's security and competition for resources were familiar themes that emerged across age-groups when discussing neighbourhood change:

*[The new migrants are] undesirables ... noisy, no respect, shouting, loitering, anti-social.*

White man

*The Polish are noisy ... fighting in the streets ... beggars [women] come to the door.*

Asian woman

*[They are] not clean and not to be trusted.*

Asian woman

*They walk in gangs and won't give way on streets ... I'm scared to go out alone at night.*

Asian woman

*[There are] foreign people, not fitting in. They are drinking all day long and are ill-mannered ... resources are over-stretched.*

Asian man

*They talk loud and are a bit dirty.*

Asian woman

This negative perspective was, however, counterbalanced by many positive comments about ethnic diversity within the inner-city areas of Bradford. Many settled residents referred, for example, to liking the "great cultural diversity", "being with people from all sorts of countries" and the "good ethnic mix". When initially asked the question 'What is bad?' about the area, relatively few residents from the settled populations mentioned poor community relations or the influx of new migrants. Some older white people

commented favourably on how they had received good support from their minority ethnic neighbours. White and Asian residents in West Bowling in particular saw the “the diversity of groups” and the presence of people from “lots of different backgrounds” as a positive feature of their area.

Most of the established white population consulted in Allerton/Lower Grange drew attention to the recent immigration of “foreign people” of “nearly every nationality” to their previously ‘white’ neighbourhood. Particular reference was made to ‘wealthy’ Asian families who are buying into the southern part of the neighbourhood. Whilst few negative comments were made about social change, the subtext was of an increasingly socially divided community. Shared areas of concern included drugs, anti-social behaviour involving young people, noise pollution and litter.

## Community tensions

Community tensions emerged as an issue for some. These sometimes spilled over into overt conflict between young Asian and Slovakian/Czech men in West Bowling in particular. This is exemplified through comments made in response to the question ‘What’s bad about where you live?’:

*Relationships between existing communities and new migrants – disharmony – relating back to the Slovaks. New communities [are] not understanding our ways of living ... Some residents live in fear.*

Young Asian man

*English and Pakistanis will take drugs, get drunk [and] will try to fight with us.*

Young Czech man

Recent Eastern European migrant men and women also recounted experiences of harassment:

*People look at me badly ... We are not bad people. They swear at us and try to slap us.*

Young Slovak man

*[There are] problems with Asians. You could just be walking and they want to fight you ...*

Young Czech man

Overt street tensions such as street fights were not mentioned as frequently in Manningham/Girlington, although both Asian and Eastern European residents made references to being afraid to go out. As we saw earlier, myths and stereotypes of new migrants as dirty, unaccommodating outsiders, threatening community harmony, also surfaced, but were not uniformly expressed.

Filipino people living in Allerton/Lower Grange also recounted experiences of harassment and racism, alongside positive inter-ethnic encounters. Many of the group talked openly about harassment in a focus groups discussion and gave examples of repeated attacks on their property and cars. Some thought this was racially motivated – “We don’t hear any English families complaining of the same vandalism.” They attributed it to “the youngsters and uneducated people”. There was a strong feeling that the police were not doing enough, despite repeated requests. Neighbourhood wardens were also criticised for their lack of visibility.

Although issues of security and racist harassment were of major concern to the Filipino residents, there were also positive comments about (white) neighbours and neighbourliness. People talked about looking after property when neighbours are away and generally being vigilant with regards to crime in the area – “Even if it’s just saying hi, at least we are aware of each other and can keep an eye out for each other.” The implication was that a stronger sense of community cohesion could be built if anti-social behaviour was tackled.

## Housing concerns

Perceptions of what is 'good housing' varied significantly, and newer migrants (and some young white people) with fewer perceived housing options were more accepting of conditions of which others were critical. Eastern European migrants indicated in the course of focus group discussions that they were relatively satisfied with their private rental housing, which was often thought to be better than accommodation in their country of origin. However, their housing choices were constrained by intermittent work and lack of knowledge of other housing options, and subsequent forum discussions revealed worries about eviction and fear of intimidation from landlords if they complained about their accommodation. Few participants were aware of whether they were eligible for social housing and did not know how to find out about this. There was a perception that asylum seekers and refugees were given more assistance than migrant workers. Most people aspired to social housing, which was seen as more affordable.

For Filipino migrants living in Allerton/Lower Grange, owner-occupation was the main and preferred tenure. Although most had rented privately when they first came to the UK, renting was perceived as 'dead money'. Most did not think they were eligible for social housing, but also showed no interest in it.

A number of the settled Asian residents living in inner Bradford appreciated the improvements that had been made through housing and area regeneration, although some young Asian women who have lived in the area for most of their lives were unhappy with what they perceived to be poor housing conditions (often owner-occupied), overcrowding and uneven regeneration. Asian men made fewer comments in this regard.

Lack of affordable accommodation was noted across groups and a few people attributed this to the impact of new migration. Some older women raised issues around special needs (adapted and accessible housing for people with disabilities) and housing for the older people. There were also some glimpses of racialised resentment over the allocation of housing resources from white social housing tenants with some references to: "the foreign people taking the housing" (white woman, West Bowling). Interviews with local service providers indicated that young men from all groups faced some of the most acute housing problems and that young Eastern European men were most vulnerable to homelessness.

## Geographical difference and the importance of context

While there were commonalities across areas in terms of new migrant victimisation and settled groups' suspicion of outsiders, overt tensions tended to be localised. This varied with people's housing circumstances, the presence of particular groups and the micro-geographies of the neighbourhood.

## Conclusion

New migration is seen as part of an ongoing process of neighbourhood change within the inner areas of Bradford in particular, which brings benefits and challenges for community relations. At times of perceived shortage and disadvantage (in relation to housing, jobs, welfare, use of community facilities, neighbourhood spaces etc.) underlying racialised tensions based on negative stereotypes and perceived 'difference' can come to the fore. However, common housing and neighbourhood concerns, and instances of positive encounter, provide a possible basis on which to build bridges and stronger understandings between groups.

Our approach to consultation was to open up a wide debate around housing, neighbourhood and community issues. However, we were struck by the strength of concern articulated about community relations, safety, anti-social behaviour and neighbourliness across all groups in the three areas, as well as a general expression of interest in housing and neighbourhood improvements. In raising these particular issues, neighbourhood residents living with the everyday challenges of migration set the agenda for discussion in the interactive forums where new and settled groups living in close proximity would be brought together.

# 3 Interactive forum design

## Introduction

The design of the interactive forums was informed by our earlier interviews with community development workers and local stakeholders, and prior consultation with residents from new and settled communities in the research localities. This had highlighted key neighbourhood concerns, some tensions between residents, certain gaps in understanding about other groups, and some shared interests across groups. The consultation was particularly valuable for highlighting key topics for discussion and directing us towards which groups might most usefully be brought together in a forum to discuss and build understanding around local housing, neighbourhood and community.

The aims of the interactive forums were threefold:

- to test different styles of interactive forums as mechanisms for inter-cultural community engagement;
- to explore residents' feelings on contentious local housing, neighbourhood and community issues (as identified through the poster forums) and to identify areas of divergence in opinion where there might be a role for leadership to break down tensions; and
- to evaluate the effectiveness of forums in bringing together new and established groups to learn about each other, to discuss local concerns and to build shared understandings of ways forward.

Four forums were conducted and evaluated in terms of the methods used and the outputs from the forum exchanges. The key principle underpinning the design of the forums was to provide a convivial, safe interactive space, where people who had probably never met before felt able to express their opinions on local concerns and, in the process, hear each other groups' views on contentious neighbourhood issues. The forums aimed to be inclusive, and interpreters were used to address language barriers. A key priority was to minimise the potential to escalate tensions between groups.

This chapter begins by discussing our approach to the design of two different styles of forum: one-off discussion forums and a photography project ending in a discussion forum. We explore issues concerning the recruitment of forum participants and outline the key principles underlying the forum design. We then draw on observations made during the forums and participants' experiences of participation to evaluate the effectiveness of the forum designs.

The findings in this chapter present:

- a positive evaluation of the interactive discussion forums and photographic forums that were tested;
- the value of a consultative approach in setting the agenda for discussion in the interactive forums;
- the role of entry and exit questionnaires in the evaluation of forums;
- the value of using interpreters so as to include new migrants in the discussion, but the risk that they may moderate the process of engagement;

- the value of including trusted and respected individuals, who can encourage and support new and settled residents to engage with others; and
- the challenges and risks involved in the implementation of interactive forums, notably with respect to the resources needed and the potential to exacerbate tensions.

## Approaching engagement

### Engaging new and settled groups

Neighbourhood tensions arising from new migration can take many different forms. There may be conflict between younger and older people, between home-owners and renters, between men and women, and between different groups of new and settled residents. A key challenge was to decide which groups might be brought together in a productive engagement that would not harm group relations by escalating tensions. Drawing on what we had learnt about community relations through the poster consultation and focus group discussions, we tested two different types of engagement:

- Two forums were designed to bring together new and settled groups where, despite some evidence of tensions, there seemed to be several areas of shared concerns and thus some potential for building mutuality. Local consultations had revealed that women with children shared similar feelings of unease about anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood safety. We therefore invited women from the Eastern European and Asian populations to a discussion forum in Girdlington, and a mix of settled (predominantly Asian) and newly resident Eastern European women to a similar forum in West Bowling (see Figure 2). Both of these forums took place in the diverse, mixed tenure inner areas of Bradford.
- Two forums brought together groups experiencing overt conflict as a test of the forums' capacity for building shared understandings in the face of everyday animosity. One of these forums brought together a range of white and Filipino men and women from mixed age groups living in Allerton/Lower Grange area. Until recently, this had been a predominantly white British area of mainly social housing. Our earlier consultation had drawn attention to racist harassment and anti-social behaviour as a locally divisive issue that had resulted in overt conflict between these new and settled residents. The second sought to engage young Asian and Slovakian/Czech men (18–25 years) experiencing ongoing tensions and occasional street violence.

We anticipated that there was a risk of failing to engage the second category of groups given their experience of overt conflict. As will be reported in Chapters 4 and 5, the nature of engagement in these two forums was different. Interactions between white British and Filipino residents of Allerton/Lower Grange were at times hostile, whilst the forum exchanges between the young men were more conciliatory.

### Styles of interactive forum

Given the diversity of groups to be engaged, we adopted a flexible approach to the forum design that allowed us to take account of cultural sensitivities (e.g. some Muslim women preferred to attend a women-only forum), language differences and motivations to participate.

Three forums, one in each of our research localities, were designed as discussion forums that brought together newcomers and settled people in a one-off event. Two were convened as forums for women (both in inner Bradford) and one invited both men and women to attend.

The fourth forum, which aimed to engage young Asian and Eastern European men in discussion, used a different mode of engagement. In order to stimulate and sustain the interest of this 'hard-to-reach'



**Figure 2: Women's forum**



group, we designed an interactive photographic project. It was felt that this had the potential to be a fun way of engaging young people who might be less interested in conventional discussion groups.

The young participants were invited to capture their views and neighbourhood experiences through photographs, using disposable cameras. Fourteen young men living in the diverse inner area of West Bowling were recruited. Ten completed the project by participating in an interactive forum to discuss emerging community and neighbourhood issues, and identify possible ways forward to improve group relations. The evaluation detailed below indicates a positive outcome.

## **Forum recruitment**

The forums were designed to be relatively small and to create an intimate setting so as to encourage everyone to participate (see Table 2). Recruitment was mainly undertaken through contacts made during the consultation period and through key trusted individuals with links to new and settled groups in the locality. Incentives to participate in the forum were offered in the form of high street vouchers.

The response from the settled population to invitations to participate was good. The recruitment of new migrants, especially recent arrivals from Eastern Europe, was, however, considerably more challenging. Despite multiple attempts to access potential participants (including translated posters, adverts in community magazines, making contacts through churches and other organisations), recruitment was extremely slow. In one area, efforts to recruit young Eastern European men to engage in a second photography project proved impracticable.

Barriers to participation by new migrants include worries about language difficulties, lack of time (for many, working, or searching for work, was a greater priority), a belief that they had nothing to say, and,

**Table 2: Composition of the forums**

	<b>White British</b>	<b>Czech/Slovak migrant</b>	<b>British Asian</b>	<b>British black/mixed</b>	<b>Filipino migrant</b>	<b>Total</b>
West Bowling women	1	7	5	3		16
Girlington women		8	6			14
Allerton/Lower Grange – men and women	13				10	23
West Bowling young men		5	4	1		10

importantly, a sense of ‘outsider status’ and associated concerns about engaging in social interaction outside their own community. The successful recruitment of more recent arrivals to the forums was dependent upon the goodwill and help of key community contacts. Trusted individuals encouraged Filipino migrants (whose English language skills were often good) and Eastern European newcomers (whose English language skills were less well developed) to participate. They also offered reassurances by accompanying them to the forum as interpreter or simply a supportive friend.

The role played by key trusted individuals in the recruitment process raises some important issues for the planning and implementation of forums. The organisation of a forum may well depend on the availability and goodwill of community contacts, who often have significant demands on their time. This can result in genuine delays in help, even when rewarded by payment. Clear communication of the project aims and recruitment criteria is essential so as to ensure that project requirements are fulfilled. Recruiters may be over-zealous and, in an effort to help, recruit more than the required number of participants. Having been lured by the prospect of payment, it can be difficult to turn away potential participants. For example, 23 participants were recruited for one discussion forum instead of our proposed target of 15. Since this was to be the first of our forums, we decided to go ahead with the full complement of recruits and test whether we were being too cautious in limiting the forum size. Our conclusion, after running three further forums with 10–15 participants, was that smaller forums are more likely to be inclusive of all participants and facilitate more productive engagement. Larger forums are more easily dominated by particular voices while others remain silent, although they can be useful for engaging a wide range of contributors.

## Forum implementation: guiding principles

The implementation of the forums was underpinned by the desire to provide a convivial, safe, inclusive, interactive space where residents could engage in a productive and enjoyable encounter. Participation took place on the basis of informed consent and on a voluntary basis.

The forums were held in the early evening in local community venues known to the participants and easily accessible to them. Children were welcomed, and an informal space, with paper and colouring pens, was made available to them in a corner of the room. Some provision for childcare was essential to the success of the forum; most of the Asian and Eastern European women participants were accompanied by their children. Although occasionally noisy and distracting, the children’s presence added to the informality of the forum atmosphere in a positive way. One Eastern European woman remarked that she regarded the mixing of the children from different backgrounds as a positive outcome of the West Bowling forum: “I liked bringing the children together. I really liked that idea ... children would start talking together quicker and communicate and start being friendlier.”

Participants were offered food upon arrival, which provided an opportunity to socialise before the formal event. Although most participants elected to sit with people from their own social group when eating (some knew each other), there was some intermixing and one woman commented favourably on the chance to sit down with people from other social groups: “I was very impressed with that, all the community together ... the way it was all organised ... the way we sat down ... there was like food as well so we could sit down and eat together.” (Asian woman, Gillington)

Inter-group discussion was facilitated by the use of an interpreter in the three forums involving Eastern European newcomers. No interpretation was needed for Filipinos participating in the fourth forum. The support of the Eastern European interpreter, who was known to, and trusted by, many of the Slovakian and Czechs participants, was central to the inclusion of this newly arrived group.

Given the history of tensions between new and settled groups brought together in the forums, steps were taken to minimise the possibility of provoking animosity between groups and further damaging community relations. A trained mediator, skilled at resolving neighbourhood disputes, joined the team convening the first forum with white and Filipino people. Subsequent forums relied on the skills of the interpreter and trusted friends in the community to mediate where necessary. These individuals acted as a safety net, in case of animosity. Their greatest contribution was to calm the rather boisterous enthusiasm of the young men engaged in the photo forum and to cajole them into interacting with a group whom they initially viewed with suspicion.

## Participatory approaches to discussion

The framework for discussion at the forums was shaped by key issues emerging from the earlier process of consultation. Individual and group safety, anti-social behaviour, priorities for housing improvement, and community relations emerged as themes of common concern across groups and neighbourhoods, although there was some variation in emphasis between localities.

In an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of many forums, where organisers may lead and often, in the process, circumscribe the discussion, residents were encouraged to express their opinions and explore their concerns and future aspirations through a range of different participatory approaches:

- Entry and exit questionnaires: participants completed a simple entry and exit questionnaire in order to chart changes in opinion during the forum (see Appendices I and II). The entry questionnaire was presented in the form of a wall poster on which residents recorded their responses to six housing, neighbourhood and community related statements using coded sticky dots (see Figure 3). Each participant was assigned a number, which allowed us to track the anonymised responses by social group. The results of the entry questionnaire were fed into the forum discussion, successfully stimulating further debate about anti-social behaviour, community safety and community relations.
- Breakout groups: small groups of 5–8 people explored their opinions on housing, neighbourhood and community issues using interactive props such as maps and photos of the local area. Participants were encouraged to engage in mixed groups of new and settled residents, although language difficulties and the need for interpretation constrained the degree of mixing in some forums.
- Emerging concerns, points of disagreement and agreed priorities within the different breakout groups were shared in a closing session. This sought to identify common ground across all participants in order to generate a better appreciation of different perspectives and positions. Participants from new and settled groups were invited to share views and build bridges between them by asking each other questions.
- Photographic project: this involved a series of meetings with the young men who were invited to generate visual material that captured their impressions, opinions and perspectives of home,



**Figure 3: Completing the entry questionnaire**



neighbourhood and community. The young Asian and Eastern European men were briefed separately on the photographic task but were brought together to caption, display and discuss their photographs with each other. This generated topics for discussion from the young men in the forum, which were interwoven with opinions expressed in the entry questionnaire.

The benefits of this participatory approach to creative documentation have been recognised as:

- bringing the research to life for those involved, thus fostering higher levels of engagement;
- providing authentic comments in people's own words about lived experiences, impressions and perspectives;
- contextualising complex situations and viewpoints within the locality and in terms of personal experience; and
- providing an effective tool for capturing and representing emotion and experience.

## Evaluation of forum design

The forums were evaluated in terms of their design as mechanisms for engagement. Since it was not practical to pilot the forum design, our approach to implementation was one of ongoing review and learning as well as a process of adjustment to the sensitivities of the encounters in each local context. This section provides some reflections on what appeared to work and the challenges of design.

The evaluation was undertaken through an analysis of the entry and exit questionnaires designed to capture participants' opinions before and after the forum, observations recorded during the forums, and follow-up in-depth interviews with a sample of 19 of the 63 forum participants. The follow-up interviews explored, amongst other things, participants' experience of the forum event. An interpreter assisted with the interviews with Eastern European participants.

Key findings to emerge from the evaluation are as follows:

- A positive experience – participants liked interacting in small groups. Most participants agreed that both the discussion and photographic forums provided a positive experience in a safe and convivial space that facilitated engagement with, and learning about, other groups living in their neighbourhood. Most participants seemed to feel at ease in the setting and liked sitting down to eat with each other. One Asian woman, for example, referred to the forum as a “relaxing” space, another said that “you felt no pressure” and an Eastern European woman observed how, in her forum, “everyone was calm”. A young Eastern European man simply commented that the photo forum “was good 'cause we were all sat down together, talking together”.
- Opportunities to voice an opinion – participants were asked in the follow-up interviews if they felt that they had had an opportunity to contribute to the forum. Most people agreed that they had a chance to have their say, although there were clearly different levels of confidence to express themselves in the forum. Our recorded observations indicated that there was a tendency for particular voices to dominate discussion in some forums. However, follow-up interviews indicated that even if participants did not say anything, they still regarded it as a worthwhile learning experience. The young men were particularly pleased to have had an opportunity to express their opinions, and some of the younger Muslim Asian women were also very appreciative of being consulted.
- The use of interpreters may moderate the process of engagement – one forum was conducted in English as a common language whilst the others had to utilise a Czech/Slovak interpreter. The use of interpreters has advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it enables residents with limited English, who may be closely implicated in neighbourhood tensions, to be included in the bridge-building process. Chapter 4 indicates that the forums presented an important opportunity for many newcomers and established residents to engage in a valuable learning experience. Although the need for interpretation inevitably disrupts the nature of the exchange, this should not necessarily be seen as harmful. The pause for interpretation gives participants more time to consider what they are going to say, which may be useful in a heated exchange and prompt more careful listening. On the other hand, we have to recognise that interpreters do mediate in the exchanges between groups (Temple and Steele, 2004). Comments made by the interpreter following the forums indicated that she had occasionally toned down some of the language used by the new migrants and that she had expressed some of their views in a more conciliatory way than had perhaps been intended. The forum using English as a common language enabled intense communication through direct face-to-face dialogue between members of different population groups. In contrast, one English-speaking participant in another forum commented that despite the presence of the interpreter “the [Eastern European] ladies were constantly fighting to be heard” and that “they were having a hard time ... because their English was so limited”.

- Entry and exit questionnaires proved useful instruments – these questionnaires were simple to administer and proved useful for monitoring changes in opinions before and after the forum. Participants responded well to the entry questionnaire. They could see the pattern of anonymised responses to the questions building up on the wall poster and were interested in the aggregated results that were fed into the forum discussion, as will be discussed in the following chapters.
- Young men enjoyed communicating through photos – reactions to the photography project from the young Eastern European and Asian men were overwhelmingly positive. Communicating with members of the other groups was a new experience for all participants and the use of photos was regarded as a good ice breaker. The developed photographs were distributed to the participants at the beginning of the forum and most of the young men seemed to forget their initial inhibitions as they sorted through their photos. In the days of the mobile phone with cameras and instant messaging, we were surprised at the excitement generated by the fruits of their endeavours. Typical comments included:

*[It gave me a] good feeling ... I liked it, it was interesting. I enjoyed doing it ... and [I] would do it again ...*

Young Eastern European man

*Yeah I think it was a good way that photo taking exercise ... they told us what they found bad about the area and we told them the same bad and good ... that photo that guy took ... drug needles ... I've lived here all my life ... I didn't know that area there was that bad.*

Young Asian man

*I put my negative and positive views forward ... putting it all on the table ... Good thing about pictures is that you can say a negative and positive through one picture ... I feel that was a good way to connect with them.*

Young Asian man

However, this last young man, who had previously been involved in mentoring and team-building exercises, went on to qualify his comments, arguing that more could have been done to “push us to talk to them”.

## Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter point to a positive evaluation of both styles of interactive forum. The photography project was particularly positively evaluated by a traditionally ‘hard-to-reach’ group of young men. The strengths of the approach to the design of the interactive forums lie in:

- a consultative approach to setting the agenda for discussion, which ensured participants’ interest in the issues raised;
- good knowledge of local issues and the neighbourhood context, through prior research and strong community contacts;
- a flexible design – this enabled us to respond to the sensitivities of the local context, to create a welcoming, culturally sensitive environment, and to mediate in testing situations;
- the use of trusted and respected individuals, who encouraged and supported new and settled residents to participate in an unfamiliar and potentially demanding process of engagement; and

- a participative approach to engagement, which allowed residents to take ownership of the event – people were encouraged to pose questions to each other, which helped to overturn misconceptions that were damaging to community relations.

The implementation of interactive forums does not, however, come without some challenges and risks:

- The recruitment of new migrants presented a particular challenge. Recruiting young men proved both difficult and time consuming. Many are suspicious of engagement, sceptical of what it might achieve and have other work-related priorities. One Czech woman said she only participated in a forum because of the cash incentive offered, although admitted that she found it a useful experience.
- Bringing together people from groups experiencing animosity and conflict runs the risk of exacerbating tension and reinforcing difference, although the use of mediators and trusted individuals can minimise the potential for harm.
- A flexible, participatory approach brings a level of uncertainty about the outputs of the forum. Discussion may evolve in a way that has not been anticipated and stronger voices may dominate the exchange. A balance needs to be struck between enabling participants to engage in meaningful interactions whilst guiding the discussion to a point where everyone feels they have gained something from the session.

The use of trusted individuals known to the participants was central to recruitment and to the successful implementation of the forums. However, this does raise some ethical questions. To what extent were people persuaded to engage in the forum when perhaps they did not feel entirely comfortable doing so? In line with accepted good research practice, we explained the reasons for the research to residents, distributed information leaflets, and gave them the opportunity to opt out before the forum. But did they feel empowered to do this? Or did they feel an obligation to the individual who recruited them? We cannot answer this question, but we felt reassured by the follow-up interview finding that the participation experience was generally positive, many people wanted more forums, and most people said that they would engage in a forum again.

# 4 Interactive forums as a mechanism for learning

## Introduction

*I think we were talking to them very well and they were talking to us very well ... We found out things about each other.*

Asian woman, Girdlington

The consultation undertaken prior to the interactive forums indicated that residents' appreciation of ethnic diversity in the three Bradford research areas was frequently underscored by a gulf in knowledge and understanding between new arrivals and settled groups. This could lead to community tensions, misapprehensions and fear of the 'other' that sometimes erupted into overt conflict, particularly amongst young men. The entry questionnaire completed at the beginning of the interactive forums confirmed the general picture painted in the consultation period; that Girdlington and Allerton/Lower Grange residents thought that different groups in their area tend to "keep themselves to themselves", whilst West Bowling residents, despite the overt tensions on the streets, represented themselves as more integrated. Nevertheless, new migrant men living in West Bowling indicated that they felt isolated (see Table 3).

The interactive forums were designed to promote open dialogue and an exchange of views and information between new and established groups. This chapter evaluates the effectiveness of the interactive forums as a mechanism for different groups to learn about each other through a discussion of local housing, neighbourhood and community concerns. The evaluation drew on multiple sources: observations, comments from trusted individuals who assisted in the mediation process, and data from follow-up interviews with a sample of participants.

The exit questionnaire revealed that all of the settled residents participating in the forums felt that they had learned something about the new migrants as a result of the forum exchanges. Most of the new migrants also felt that they had learned something about the communities into which they were trying to integrate. The following sections look in detail at what they learned and the impact of this new knowledge on their views of other groups.

In order to explore how people's opinions had changed as a result of this learning process, the follow-up interviews asked participants to reflect on their views of other groups before and after the forum. Since we were unable to contact the Filipino forum participants for a follow-up interview, we focus our analysis in this chapter on the settled Asian, black and white populations' engagement with recent Eastern European arrivals in inner Bradford.

The key findings to emerge from this chapter are as follows:

- Both the settled populations and newcomers to the inner areas conveyed a sense of social and cultural difference, and sometimes hatred, prior to meeting members of these groups in the forums.
- A perception of polarised communities was evidenced with reference to examples of fear, conflict and harassment by both groups.



**Table 3: Entry questionnaire responses: ‘Different communities keep themselves to themselves’**

	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
<b>West Bowling</b>			
• migrant women	3	4	0
• settled women	3	6	0
<b>Girlington</b>			
• migrant women	8	0	0
• settled women	4	0	2
<b>Allerton/Lower Grange</b>			
• migrant men and women	7	0	3
• settled men and women	9	1	1
<b>West Bowling</b>			
• migrant young men	4	1	0
• settled young men	1	3	1

- The strongest antipathies towards the Eastern European migrants were expressed by members of the Muslim Asian population. These were rooted in a perceived cultural and religious distance.
- Despite challenges, all of the forums involving Asian and Eastern European residents were successful in promoting some degree of contact, communication and learning amongst the groups.
- Learning was a two-way process, but it appeared to have the greatest impact on the misconceptions and negative stereotypes held by the settled populations.
- Key areas of knowledge gained were: some groups have parallel migration histories; people from other groups are generally friendly and want to mix; fear and harassment underpins many community tensions; the depth of new migrants’ poverty and deprivation.

## Divided communities – perceptions of difference

Residents were asked, in the follow-up interviews, to recount their impressions of each other prior to meeting at the forum. Both the settled populations and newcomers conveyed a sense of social and cultural difference. In some cases, this was expressed in terms of resentment and, in Girlington, even hatred. Young Eastern European men living in West Bowling referred to young Asian men as “not very good people” and “quite big-headed”, whilst young Asian locals made stereotypical references to these newcomers as dirty and having a negative impact on the area:

*To be honest I used to think they were like not clean, they used to like make the area look bad.*

*My street’s a clean street ... when you walk down [...] area, where most of the foreign people live ... [there is a] smell from there ... it’s a bit unhygienic.*

One Eastern European woman agreed that the streets of privately rented housing where the new migrants had settled were dirty and neglected. We might in part attribute this to poor housing conditions and high

levels of overcrowding, rather than the different social norms of the newcomers. Nevertheless, there is also some evidence of conflict arising through new migrants' anti-social behaviour, such as urinating in the streets, drinking in public places, dumping rubbish and rooting through rubbish bins. These concerns are being addressed by support and advice from Bradford's neighbourhood wardens as they work with the new arrivals, but they still pervaded the settled groups' views of the newcomers.

Some of the strongest antipathies towards the Eastern European migrants were expressed by members of the Muslim Asian population, who have worked over the decades to establish a strong community base within Bradford's inner areas. As Hickman, *et al.* (2008) have observed, well-established groups who feel a sense of ownership of an area may feel particularly resentful of newcomers. For Muslim Asian residents, key markers of difference between the groups were rooted in cultural and religious distance. This was most clearly manifest in tensions around the consumption of alcohol by some young Eastern European men in the streets, and perceived incivility and disrespect for the modesty of Muslim women by newcomers of both sexes.

The perception of polarised communities was evidenced with reference to examples of fear, conflict and harassment by both groups. One Eastern European woman in Girlington recounted how "Asians [had been] throwing things at the house" whilst an Asian woman in the same area said that she felt intimidated by groups of young Eastern European men (although she added that she was fearful of other groups of young men too). However, fear of harassment was most keenly felt by the Eastern European newcomers, regardless of age or sex. This echoed the findings of our earlier period of community consultation (see Chapter 2). For example, one young man in West Bowling described how he was "very afraid ... and worried about my young brothers and sisters". In a different part of the inner city, an Eastern European woman conveyed her fear through relating a particular incident:

*I was taking [the] children back home from school and one of them, little one, was shouting at us ... "fucking Slovakian people" and all stuff like this. He went back inside of the shop and his brother came out ... I was just running home, he was running after me.*

As explored in the next section, each group seemed genuinely surprised to learn about the level of fear experienced by the other group and how it was affecting social relations in the neighbourhood.

## Learning through communication

Given the relatively troubled history of relations between Asian and Eastern European residents, it was not surprising that when people from these groups came together in the same room for the forum, there was some nervousness about the encounter. In the early stages of two of the forums, the anxiety was palpable. Young Eastern European men arriving for the discussion associated with the photography project indicated to the interpreter that they were "nervous about sitting at the same table as Asian lads". Meanwhile, the interpreter, mediator and trusted friend of the Eastern European people attending the Girlington forum advised against mixing Asian and Eastern European women in the breakout groups, given the animosity and anxiety felt by the new migrant participants. Certainly, both breakout groups indulged in a narrative of blaming the other for community tensions during the initial discussions.

Despite these challenges, all of the inner-city forums involving Asian and Eastern European residents were successful in promoting some degree of contact, communication and learning amongst the groups. It was observed that, as the forums progressed, participants from the settled populations began to moderate their behaviour towards the new migrants as they learned more about their difficult circumstances. The learning was a two-way process, but it appeared to have the greatest impact on the misconceptions and negative stereotypes held by the settled populations.

The following sections explore participants' views on the value of forums as a mechanism for opening up channels of communication between groups and point to areas of learning on which to build.

## Promoting contact and communication

Interviews with participants indicated that some people simply valued the opportunity for contact with other groups afforded by the forums. Eastern European isolation from other groups was exacerbated by their newcomer status and language difficulties for some. However, as Farnell (2009) recounts, some of Bradford's Muslim women also experience limited opportunities for socialising outside of their immediate circle of family and friends, which has implications for bridge building. One young Muslim Asian woman from West Bowling indicated how the opportunity for social contact and information exchange presented by forums can bring potentially transformative effects:

*My opinions changed from after that meeting 'cause it's like I've never really sat and chatted to anyone before ... you got to find out more about them, what the kids have to put up with and what they have to put up with, with their housing conditions.*

She added that she would like to attend more forums and interact more widely in order to escape her sense of isolation, as "we [Muslim women] just spend time in our houses".

## Challenging preconceived views

The inter-cultural dialogue within the forums brought an exchange of knowledge which had the potential to shift the perceptions of the other groups and challenge preconceived views rooted in stereotypes, myths and misunderstandings. As previously noted (see Chapter 3), interpreters did intervene in, and to a certain extent moderate, the nature of engagements. Also, some participants may have felt too vulnerable to express their true feelings, and some interviewees admitted that they felt unwilling to challenge the dominant discourse of their group so as not to seem disloyal. Nevertheless, most interviewees agreed that the forums had been an important learning experience for them. The following key areas of knowledge were gained.

### Some groups have parallel migration histories

Settled groups admitted that, before the forums, they knew little about the new migrants' background or why they had come to Bradford. Young Asian men indicated that the forums gave them "a bit of insight into where they [Eastern European people] came from, and their background ... and the racism they have faced here and in their own country". Parallels were drawn with their grandparents' migration experience.

*... you know how we used to say Paki bashing, there was a lot of Czecho bashing ... They're just like us lot trying to earn a wage for their family ... they kind of remind me of like how our granddads were when they came to this country.*

As will be explored in Chapter 5, this presented an opportunity for building empathy.

### People from other groups are generally friendly and want to mix

Both the settled and new residents expressed surprise that people from groups with which they had no contact were friendly and willing to mix. As Asian women attending the Girlington forum explained:

*I thought that they didn't want to mix in with us, but they do want to mix in with us. But they're scared of us, they're scared of the young community.*

*I [thought] they weren't friendly ... when we got to know them they were really nice ... I found out loads of things about them, how we can get on really well.*



These sentiments were echoed by an Asian woman who had participated in the West Bowling forum who referred to the Eastern European women living in her area as “really nice people, ... friendly people”.

New migrants also talked about the positive outcome of their engagement with settled populations through the forums. One young Eastern European man, who had felt particularly vulnerable and marginalised by the overt hostility of some young Asian men prior to the forum, revealed afterwards that “something has surprised me, that they want to make friends with us ... and even though they were talking Pakistani language between themselves I didn’t feel afraid.”

Thus learning through inter-cultural dialogue can bring some appreciation of the socially constructed nature of divisions that are grounded in lack of knowledge and fear of the ‘other’.

### ***Fear and harassment underpins many community tensions***

Women were genuinely surprised to learn about the level of fear felt by Eastern European residents and their experience of harassment. A black woman in West Bowling recognised the adverse effects of harassment on the quality of lives of Eastern European people in her neighbourhood:

*Their children are being bullied because they’re different, that was really sad to hear, and the ladies don’t feel comfortable leaving their homes ... the children could not play out like everybody else ... the windows were being smashed, people throwing the rubbish in the gardens ... people here are doing that to somebody else because they’re different and the only thing different about them is that they weren’t born here.*

Prior to the forum, Asian women in Girdlington seemed to be largely unaware of the extent of Eastern European victimisation by young Asian men and of its potent effects on community relations. Two Asian women indicated that they now had a better understanding of how fear reinforces perceived social differences:

*I was quite glad that I came to that meeting because now I know what they think of us and what we think of them ... what made them frightened of us.*

*Some of them I heard saying, Asian people are battering us and stuff like that, they hit us ... sometimes we feel scared going past them and the same way they said about our Asian people ... we had the same opinions but we were both scared to talk to each other about them.*

Nevertheless, when some Eastern European women in the forum made reference to the harmful effects of racist taunting in the playground, the Asian women were fairly dismissive of the effects of this, saying “that’s just kids”.

Young Asian men also acknowledged the intimidation and pressures experienced by young Eastern European men and their families as they settled amongst long established West Bowling residents. As one interviewee admitted: “I think personally it’s bad for them because ... their houses, windows are getting smashed through ...”. However, there also seemed to be an acceptance that this was an unavoidable ‘rite of passage’ that all new groups (including earlier Asian generations) must go through.

### ***The extent of new migrant poverty and deprivation***

Information exchanged during the forums also brought greater appreciation amongst settled residents of the difficult circumstances faced by the new arrivals. Discussions of new migrants’ housing, poverty and welfare entitlements were revealing and prompted some new awareness of new migrants’ ‘unacceptable’ living conditions and behaviour.

Discussions in West Bowling explored shared concerns across the groups about poor housing conditions in the area, particularly the prevalence of damp and vermin. However, the extreme housing

deprivation and social exclusion of some new migrants came as a shock to some settled residents. One Asian woman admitted that the forum discussion had been:

*a real eye opener ... I think housing-wise they [Eastern European people] are more vulnerable to be treated unfairly ... they don't understand the law in terms of housing over here ... I don't think they understand much about what rights they have as tenants.*

Another Asian woman endorsed this view, saying she had learned “how unfairly they’re getting treated with the housing and everything ... and how bad their housing conditions [are]”. Comments offered by a black interviewee followed a similar vein. Referring to past experiences of her own community, she said: “I was shocked to realise that the same thing from the 60s is happening now ... to hear that seven people were staying in one- and two-bedroom houses, that did surprise me”.

The forum discussion also brought a new appreciation of the poverty experienced by some Eastern European newcomers and challenged certain misunderstandings about migrants’ welfare entitlements. One Gillingham Asian woman described how her disapproval of some Eastern European residents’ behaviour had been shaped by these misconceptions:

*I learnt how they live ... what sort of money they live on and it's really really hard ... When I didn't know them, I thought they had exact money like us, but why do they do like shoplifting and things like that? I couldn't understand that. But when they told me they didn't have no benefits whatsoever, that makes them do that sort of stuff.*

The Asian women were also surprised to learn that poverty was driving Eastern European women to search for clothing in the recycling bins. This habit had become a major source of contention in the neighbourhood because of the mess sometimes left behind.

The young Asian men participating in the photography project also indicated that images produced by young Eastern European residents had made them more aware of new migrants’ difficult circumstances and “what kind of things they’re living with”. One empathised, saying “you feel for them, don’t you?” Another related how the photographic exercise had revealed how “not many of them are in work and it’s hard for them to get a job ... [and how] they have been bullied as well a few of them”.

## Conclusion

The interactive forums presented an important opportunity for contact, opening up a channel for communication and mutual learning. Settled residents in particular gained a greater awareness and appreciation of new migrants’ backgrounds and living conditions that helped to challenge some previously held stereotypes and counter misunderstanding about the newcomers. As one young Asian man acknowledged: “They’re just like us normal people really, once you get to know them and not listen to people’s feedback about them” (i.e. that they are dirty etc.).

These findings have some positive implications for building bridges, strengthening community relations and eroding the fear that can pervade poor relations between new and settled groups. Importantly, community-based interactive forums could potentially provide a contribution to wider community development and leadership initiatives designed to reframe ways of thinking about new arrivals, and their contribution at the neighbourhood scale and beyond. However, some important questions remain with regards to how far the learning experience offered by a forum can contribute not only to the reframing of perceptions of groups, but also to the development of shared understandings of ways to working towards a better everyday life. This is explored further in Chapter 5.

# 5 Building shared understanding

## Introduction

The interactive forums have been positively evaluated for their potential to present opportunities for contact and communication between new and settled groups. This chapter turns to an evaluation of the forums for their capacity to help build shared understandings of ways to improve everyday life in the neighbourhood.

The chapter begins by exploring the housing, neighbourhood and community related issues discussed in the forums, identifying areas of common concern as well as divergences of opinion amongst new and settled residents in the three Bradford research localities. It then goes on to consider residents' perceptions of the potential to collaborate across groups to tackle common concerns.

The forum discussions ranged over a number of housing, neighbourhood and community concerns, although the emphasis was different in each locality. This reflected different local priorities and the capacity of residents to shape their own agenda for discussion in the forums.

Key findings presented in this chapter are:

- There was no particular convergence of understanding on housing priorities between new and settled groups. This reflects differences in tenure, histories and aspirations.
- There was much greater shared interest in discussions about personal safety and anti-social behaviour, and some shared understanding of this affected community relations and undermined the quality of life in the three areas.
- All of the Eastern European forum participants felt marginalised by harassment.
- Tensions arose between new and settled migrants in Allerton/Lower Grange because of strongly divergent views on parenting skills, the importance of parental responsibility and discipline of children in the home.
- There was some shared understanding of problems affecting the neighbourhood and community, such as the destructive influence of crime, harassment and anti-social behaviour, but there was not always agreement on the causes and solutions to these.
- There was some evidence of a growing appreciation of other people's points of view and a convergence of understanding as forum discussions progressed.
- Settled groups saw greater potential for improving community relations and a stronger sense of commonalities between groups than the new arrivals.
- Forum exchanges can sometimes reinforce a sense of difference.

## Housing, neighbourhood and community concerns

Some time was devoted to a discussion of housing conditions, affordability, fairness in the allocation of social housing, and general housing disrepair in the forums' breakout groups. Residents of Bradford's inner areas generally agreed that the private rental housing needed further improvement and that private landlords in West Bowling and Girdlington did not provide a good service. Allerton/Lower Grange residents were happier about the service and accommodation provided by private landlords in their area.

There was no particular convergence of understanding nor interest in seeking an agreement on housing priorities between new and settled groups. This can perhaps be attributed to differences in housing tenure between the groups (Eastern European newcomers were private renters, Asian and Filipino residents were mostly owners, and white households were more likely to be living in social housing), the different housing expectations of recent arrivals versus longer term residents, the new migrants' limited knowledge of the housing market, and different expectations of future housing pathways. Several Filipino migrants, for example, declared their aspiration to move out of the Allerton/Lower Grange area, whilst white residents were more committed to social renting in the neighbourhood. Eastern European migrants living in Bradford's inner city aspired to social housing (although their knowledge of their housing entitlements was limited) whilst their Asian neighbours were more concerned with questions of fairness related to the regeneration of their owner-occupied properties. Furthermore, since several Eastern European women were renting from Asian landlords, questions around tackling disrepair in the private rental sector were not fully pursued by the forum participants. Eastern European participants may have felt vulnerable and marginal in circumstances where they had no other housing choices.

There was much greater shared interest in discussions about personal safety and anti-social behaviour by young people. It was evident from the entry questionnaire at the beginning of the forum that these concerns played a role in shaping how different groups viewed their neighbourhood. The direction of the forum discussions and the intensity of feelings expressed confirmed that these issues preoccupied many new and settled residents. Although there were some divergent opinions between groups about their neighbourhoods as places to live, the discussions uncovered some shared understanding of how safety and anti-social behaviour affected community relations and undermined the quality of life in the three areas. To summarise:

- West Bowling women held divergent opinions on whether their neighbourhood was a good, safe place to live. Safety was a significant concern for the new arrivals; nearly all of the Eastern European women did not see West Bowling as a safe place, although most felt that the neighbourhood was a good place to live because of the presence of other people from Eastern Europe. Settled groups were much more likely to perceive West Bowling as a safe space, although most Asian women did not feel the neighbourhood was a good place to live. Focus group discussions had indicated that they probably aspired to better housing elsewhere.
- Anti-social behaviour in West Bowling was perceived to be a problem locally by the majority of women from all groups, although Eastern European women, who felt that their families were often victimised, viewed it as particularly problematic. Forum discussion focused on questions of responsibility for young people's anti-social behaviour. Women from both settled and new communities favoured further long-term community development and community cohesion initiatives with younger children, but expressed some feelings of powerlessness to stop older children from engaging in anti-social behaviour.
- Young men living in West Bowling all recognised anti-social behaviour as a problem locally, although it did not stop them feeling that this was a good place to live. They nevertheless held divergent views on safety. All of the young Eastern European male forum participants viewed West Bowling as an unsafe

place (in line with the Eastern European women), and indicated in the forum that they felt marginalised by harassment. Meanwhile young Asian men were divided in their opinions on the safety of West Bowling as a place.

- The entry questionnaire indicated that Girdlington women held strongly divergent opinions on Girdlington as a neighbourhood. Whilst all of the Asian women felt that it was a good place, the Eastern European women, in contrast, felt that it was neither a good nor a safe place to live, and that anti-social behaviour was a problem. In contrast, Asian women felt fairly secure in the predominantly Asian community spaces of Girdlington. Relatively few viewed anti-social behaviour as a problem at the beginning of the forum, although, as explored in Chapter 4, much of the forum discussion revolved around the marginalising and debilitating effects of racist harassment and they modified their opinions afterwards. During the course of the forum, each group of women blamed the other for failing to control the children responsible for anti-social behaviour.
- Most male and female participants in the Allerton/Lower Grange forum expressed fairly negative views about their neighbourhood as a place to live. Very few people indicated in the entry questionnaire that it was good place. Overwhelmingly negative opinions on safety and anti-social behaviour played a strong part in this evaluation. The entry questionnaire indicated that hardly anyone thought of Allerton/Lower Grange as a safe place, and most people in each group agreed that 'anti-social behaviour is a problem' locally. During the forum, an animated discussion centred on potential solutions to anti-social behaviour. This revealed strongly divergent views on parenting skills, the importance of parental responsibility and discipline of children in the home. All residents agreed that discipline in the home was important, but people's expectations, understanding of this and experiences of parenting varied across groups. Some of the debate was polarised. One group of young white British mothers argued that it was difficult to control their older children once they were outside the home and exposed to other influences in a '*rough area*'. Filipino migrants, whose children were generally younger and less exposed to potentially negative outside influences, gave priority to greater parental responsibility and the role of immediate family networks in promoting respect amongst children and young people.

## **Towards shared understanding**

The key messages from this stage of the evaluation are mixed. There was some shared understanding of the nature of problems affecting the neighbourhood and community, but there was not always agreement on the causes and solutions to these.

### **Signs of convergence**

During the forum discussions, certain areas of general agreement across groups of residents emerged in relation to:

- the destructive influence of crime, harassment and anti-social behaviour on the community and neighbourhood;
- the need to improve services, facilities and policing as a way of reducing the negative influences on young people outside the home;
- the desirability of promoting mixing amongst children and young people at school and in the neighbourhood; and

- the value of communication and learning about other groups through forums or by other means.

We also saw evidence in several forums of a growing appreciation of other people's points of view as discussions progressed. Notably, there was some empathy from settled groups for new migrants' circumstances and a willingness to listen to their concerns. Asian people, in particular, acknowledged a shared migrant experience that was underpinned by racism and exclusion, which could provide a basis for developing a sense of communality and greater understanding between local residents:

*... they kind of remind me of like how our granddads were when they came to this country ... a lot of racism.*

Young Asian man, West Bowling

*First when Asians came, when they came first to this country, they were like that as well [living in poverty] ... you kind of feel sorry for them ... people like them struggle through it and I think people like us we should help them ...*

Asian woman, Girlington

There was also some convergence of understanding around views on neighbourliness and what might be perceived as anti-social behaviour. For example, in the Girlington forum, Asian women's disapproval of new migrants' search for clothing in the recycling bins was tempered by a new appreciation of their poverty, whilst the newcomers admitted that the mess often left behind was unacceptable. This resulted in a search for solutions by the women, with the Asian women offering to facilitate clothing exchanges. Women in both the Girlington and West Bowling forums also favoured using local community centres to host more inter-cultural events in order to increase group contact and encourage mixing amongst younger children, who were sometimes drawn into racist harassment.

## Challenges to building common understandings

Despite some evidence of a convergence in understanding on local issues through forum encounters, new and settled groups might well need support through leadership and capacity building initiatives if this is to be sustained. Follow-up interviews identified several key challenges.

Settled groups saw greater potential for improving community relations and a stronger sense of commonalities between groups than the new arrivals. Some Asian women interviewees, for example, saw distinct possibilities for bridge building. They felt that the forums had shown that "we can get on really well" and can "work together". Eastern European migrants were much more wary. The forums did provide them with some reassurances and play a role in helping to alleviate their fear of victimisation. For example, one woman concluded afterwards: "I think if you do not do anything bad to them they will not do anything bad to you." However, the newcomers were much less optimistic about the potential for collaboration. Both male and female new migrants participating in the forums saw themselves as vulnerable and marginal residents in the close-knit communities where they had settled. Certainly, young Eastern European men saw little common ground between themselves and young Asian men, reverting instead to expressions and displays of masculinity to assert their identity and claim a space in the neighbourhood where they did not feel they belonged.

Although there was evidence of efforts to build bridges between groups in the forums, the foundations for these were fragile. Comments made by both new and settled groups during the follow-up interviews suggest that tolerance of difference was limited; reflections on inter-cultural relations easily lapsed into negative stereotypes and discourses of 'otherness'. Young men referred to religious differences and customs that set the groups apart and women were often critical of the other group's social norms and approaches to parenting. Established groups' willingness to build bridges was underpinned by the view



that newcomers should adjust and integrate, as their parents and grandparents had done. These findings point to the continuing importance of policy initiatives that foster contact and learning about other groups as well as understandings of similarities rather than differences amongst neighbours.

It also has to be acknowledged that forums can sometimes reinforce a sense of difference. Participants in the Allerton/Lower Grange forum felt that the new and settled groups remained as far apart as ever after the heated discussion about parenting and parental responsibility. Although the mediator helped to find a measure of accord between dissenting residents during the forum, one participant observed afterwards: “we were fighting our corners for our different race”.

## Conclusion

The evaluation of interactive forums as a mechanism for engaging new and settled residents has underlined their value for contact, communication and learning about other groups. This opens up the potential for recognising common interests and shared understandings around housing, neighbourhood and community issues. Forums can also provide a space for neglected or disregarded voices, such as those of new migrants and groups such as single parents, to have their say and rebut unfair claims made against them. It is possible that, with support from skilled negotiators or trusted community leaders, new understandings around difficult challenges (such as parenting and anti-social behaviour) could be negotiated. We have to recognise the limits, however, of what can be achieved through a single encounter, especially given religious and cultural differences, the power of group stereotypes to foster divisions, and ongoing racist behaviour in the neighbourhood.

Thus, whilst this project has uncovered some convergence of understanding on neighbourhood problems and priorities between residents of multi-ethnic areas, and recognises the potential to build on this, we have also seen evidence of the fragility of inter-cultural relations and agreements on the causes and solutions to problems in areas of rapid social change. This suggests that there are very real challenges facing neighbourhood communities that have been enjoined by the Coalition Government to take responsibility for identifying and solving their local problems and producing a common vision for the future. As in any neighbourhood, there is a danger that certain voices will dominate whilst others will be marginalised. Groups, such as new migrants (and single parents), who may well be perceived as ‘different’ (because of their religious or cultural heritage), as unwelcome outsiders, or as deviating from social norms, may be constructed as part of the problem. This may result in their exclusion from decision-making processes or from co-operative ventures to improve service delivery.

Our findings suggest that there may well be a need for groundwork to build the confidence of new and settled residents to engage with each other so that they can arrive at a collective understanding of local issues and how to tackle them. The recruitment of community link workers can play an important role in building trust between groups and enhance participation in interactive forums and other events that provide opportunities for building convergences of opinion. Evidence from our review (see Chapter 1) suggests that the success of such local initiatives is likely to be enhanced when embedded within wider partnership strategies (statutory and third sector agencies) that involve ‘myth busting’, challenging negative stereotypes and promoting more positive discourses on migration, at both local and national scales.

# 6 Outcomes, lessons and policy implications

*I want more of them ... I must admit it opened my eyes.*

(Asian woman, West Bowling discussion forum)

## Introduction

New migration is likely to continue to be a driver of change at the local level for many years to come. Despite political rhetoric about reducing the scale of immigration to the levels of the 1990s, large numbers of migrants from the European Union in particular are likely to continue to arrive in the UK. As Perry's (2008) review of studies on immigration and settlement reveals, this migration is likely to impact significantly on relatively deprived neighbourhoods, such as those we have researched in the city of Bradford. It will also bring newcomers to some rural areas with little history of new migration and cultural diversity. As Vertovec (2007) has noted, the wide range of migrant origins and migration routes over the last two decades has brought a 'super-diversity' of migrants, with varying needs and aspirations, to settle alongside established populations. However, to date, the new Coalition Government has offered little support for those local communities trying to manage the challenges of new migration or negotiate differences in outlook and experience arising from this super-diversity. Rather, the principles enshrined in the 'Big Society' agenda are ones of self-help, mutual responsibility and neighbourly co-operation in coping with change.

The community-based forums delivered in Bradford provide some insights into how local engagement in areas of new migration might be approached in a bid to develop a shared awareness of local problems, overcome differences, enhance a sense of communality and build collective visions for the neighbourhood's future. The project has specifically sought:

- to evaluate the effectiveness of interactive community forums as a mechanism for inter-cultural engagement;
- to identify areas of commonality and divergence in opinions on housing, neighbourhood and community issues between new and settled groups; and
- to explore the potential for building a shared understanding of ways to improve everyday life in Bradford.

The research project has taken a rigorous approach to the evaluation of the forums' effectiveness through its use of questionnaire data, recorded observations and in-depth interviews with participants. The findings presented in this report thus provide a firm evidence base on which:

- to highlight demonstrable impacts – immediate positive and negative impacts are identified as well as longer-term impacts, such as an increase in empathetic understanding, enhanced everyday civility amongst women in particular, and a recognition amongst some of the potential for collaboration; and
- to draw out lessons for policy-makers – this focuses on the value of forums for communication, learning and understanding, the practical challenges and risks involved in forum implementation, and the potential to build on positive forum exchanges through strategic and supportive policy initiatives.

## Impact and outcomes

The effectiveness of inter-cultural engagement through the forums can be assessed in terms of its immediate and longer term impact, as well as the potential for effecting change through collaborative local initiatives.

### Immediate impact

As previously noted, despite a history of inter-group rivalries, tensions and strong initial animosity in two forums, there appeared to be an openness to discussion between new and settled residents in the forums. Significantly, it was observed that some settled residents appeared to moderate their confrontational behaviour as they learned more about the extent of new migrants' victimisation and challenging living conditions, and as misunderstandings and preconceptions were overturned.

There were also some immediate positive outcomes noted during the forums that served to open up the potential for community building and neighbourliness. Asian and Eastern European women in Girlington, for example, favoured further joint events and suggested clothing exchanges as well as more forums. The young men participating in the photography project responded positively to the suggestion of a game of football following the forum discussion; as one young Asian man commented afterwards, the participants "were all up for it".

Observable negative impacts were limited to the Allerton/Lower Grange forum, where divergent views on parenting led some young white mothers to feel that they were being blamed for poor parenting and scapegoated for escalating anti-social behaviour on the estate. Two of these women felt afterwards that this part of the forum discussion had divided along cultural lines and that "the way they painted it made us as if we just didn't care about our kids ... and it were pretty nasty". The use of mediators and trusted individuals can potentially turn frank discussions such as these into more productive encounters.

### Longer-term impacts

Interviewees were asked to reflect on whether they had gained anything from their participation in the forum in the longer term. Many of the settled residents referred to the positive learning experience (see Chapter 4) and the emergence of an empathetic understanding of the newcomers' circumstances.

It was also evident that mediated and positive encounters during the forum increased the potential for everyday civility, particularly amongst women. Several participants in all three inner-city forums reported that they had greeted people on the street since their forum. Comments from participants in the Girlington women's forum, which began with expressions of social distance and animosity on both sides, illustrate the potential for positive, everyday outcomes:

*One of them, she gave me a bag full of clothes ... she sees me passing when I go to school to pick the children up ... I will say hello to her, she will say hello to me, she even smiles at me.*

Eastern European woman, Girlington

*I feel as though it got me a little bit closer to the Asian ladies 'cause I know one of them and I keep seeing her around ... I do say hello and stuff but I can't have a conversation with her because of the language barrier.*

Eastern European woman, Girlington

*I've seen them around ... smiled and said hello ... now like we go past each other, smile at each other ... be more friendly.*

Asian woman, Girlington

The young Eastern European men participating in the photographic forum were more guarded and some admitted that although they had subsequently seen the Asian participants on the streets, they had not acknowledged them. Instead they had “just ignored each other and carried on with our business”. Openness to the idea of everyday conviviality seemed less immediately appealing to this vulnerable group that was more familiar with overt displays of masculinity based on cultural difference. The sense of a gulf between the groups was reinforced by some young Asian men; one explained: “I’ve seen some of them [since the forum] ... we don’t speak to them that much. We’re not on that friend kind of vibe with them.” This suggests that much more work is needed to engage younger men than some other groups, and to sustain potentially positive single encounters. Youth leadership and community development work which focuses on inter-cultural engagement, e.g. through sporting activities, has the potential to provide a foundation for greater civility. Haque’s (2010) overview of what works when integrating new migrants indicates that such activities, when conducted in neutral spaces, have the potential to disrupt negative group stereotypes because of the focus on talents and skills.

## Potential for collaboration

Some interviewees felt that there was the potential for new and settled residents to work together to tackle shared local concerns, but others recognised that there was more work to be done in overcoming perceived differences and establishing trust between groups. Three young Asian men, who had benefited from involvement in community development work, saw the value of such bridging initiatives and suggested:

*[We could do] ice breaker trips ... get them to do team building activities in mixed groups ... they'll start to like each other once they've got that trust ...*

*[Do projects that] build kind of a relationship ... kind of like a pathway to them.*

*Do some sports together so we get to know each other; we get friendlier.*

These young men’s willingness to consider the possibilities of outreach work derives from their own positive experiences. But how representative are they? One Asian interviewee made a more sobering observation:

*Some of our lads, they don't like to associate themselves with Eastern Europeans. It might be hard to get them together ... Some of the lads I know have got strong views about not being nowhere near them.*

Young Eastern European men were certainly sceptical about the value of bridging initiatives. One attributed his pessimism to a feeling of exclusion and marginalisation, a comment echoed by others:

*I don't think it's going to improve anything. I don't think there is any chance of us doing anything to make things better, to get to know each other more because they walk around like they own Bradford.*

Although most women were more conciliatory than the young men and discussed the possibility of taking joint initiatives to tackle anti-social behaviour, groundwork would be needed to overcome religious and cultural differences, including divergent views on parenting in difficult environments. Neighbourhood wardens, who know their local area and many of its residents well, can play an important role in this regard. By tackling small (often racialised) incivilities and helping to mediate in everyday disputes on a routine basis, they can contribute to feelings of safety and belonging which help to build trust between residents in multi-ethnic communities.

## Lessons

A range of wider transferable lessons can be drawn from this research:

### Forums provide opportunities for communication, learning and understanding

Participatory community-based forums can be valuable mechanisms promoting inter-cultural communication and learning, and have the potential to help develop shared understandings and neighbourliness between new and settled residents. They offer a form of engagement which moves beyond the 'contact hypothesis' underpinning many community cohesion initiatives (such as shared social events) and may help to build 'communities of place'. Importantly, forum discussions can help to challenge misunderstanding and negative stereotypes of new and settled groups in an area, and identify areas of commonality on which to build. For example, settled residents in Bradford's diverse inner-city areas felt the forums helped them learn more about new Eastern European migrants, their housing circumstances and the problems they faced as new arrivals.

Residents participating in the Bradford project liked engaging in participatory forums and most felt that it was a worthwhile experience. This is evidenced by a wide range of positive comments across the different forums and groups (see Figure 4). Women in particular wanted more forums and opportunities for contact with other groups. There was, however, one dissenting voice, which raised a question about the nature of the social exchange:

*I think the idea was good but I feel people were acting in a way. They were putting on different faces. They weren't being that honest ... I feel they only went because of the money.*

Eastern European woman, West Bowling

Some people may feel more confident in expressing sensitive views on community relations in the 'safe space' of a single group discussion. It is possible that articulated views on contentious topics may be toned down or left unspoken in interactive forums, although forum observations and feedback suggested that people valued the opportunity to express their viewpoints.

### Forums can bring practical challenges

The recruitment of new migrants can be difficult and time consuming, although trusted individuals from local communities (acting in effect as 'project champions') can play an invaluable role in carrying these types of enterprises forward. Forums are also resource-intensive to convene, and different types of forum are likely to be needed for differing contexts and groups of people.

Some residents are unlikely to become involved unless they feel they have support from someone that they can trust or assistance with communication (especially when there are language differences). However, when given reassurances, many people respond well to projects in which they feel they have a stake. This was evident from the positive feedback received from young men participating in the forum that used photography as a means of communication. They enjoyed the experience and valued the opportunity to have their voices heard.

### Building on the positive experiences of forums

Forums have the potential to bring positive encounters that can provide the basis for building bridges between groups and can foster neighbourliness. However, single encounters will have limited impact, especially when there are religious and cultural differences and ongoing racist behaviour in the neighbourhood. Forums are likely to be most effective if embedded within a wider strategic partnership

programme to manage neighbourhood change and promote community cohesion that includes ‘myth-busting’ strategies, challenges to negative discourses on immigration, and policies to address structural inequalities, racist behaviour and social exclusions. This requires strong local leadership and capacity building in community-based organisations aiming to spearhead local initiatives. Support for trusted individuals in the communities, who can act as project champions or agents of change, would be of particular value.

There is also potential to build on settled residents’ perceptions of commonalities between themselves and the groups of newcomers. Support is needed to build on positive suggestions for inter-cultural initiatives, such as further community events and sporting activities for young men.

### **Engaging new and settled residents in forum discussions can bring risks**

Exploring areas of potential conflict brings a risk of reinforcing tensions and inter-group differences, although this can be minimised through the use of professional mediators or trusted people from the local community. Even when tensions are evident, areas of commonality (e.g. around community safety and anti-social behaviour) seem substantial enough in many cases to generate meaningful attempts to facilitate discussion and engagement between groups.

## **Conclusion**

The key messages to emerge from this research project are:

- Interactive forums can provide an important mechanism for engaging new and settled residents, thereby opening up the potential for learning about each other, recognising common interests and developing shared understandings around housing, neighbourhood and community issues.
- Bridges can be built between new and settled groups but, because of ongoing racism and discourses of ‘otherness’ at the local and national scales, their foundations are relatively fragile.

This suggests that there are significant risks associated with the Coalition Government’s shift in emphasis towards local control through its ‘Big Society’ agenda. This aims to give local people a greater say in the running of their neighbourhood and community, but the potential for successful and inclusive local collaboration could well be undermined by the emergence of divergent views, the marginalisation of weaker voices, the exclusion of newer groups from decision-making and collaborative ventures, the scapegoating of newcomers and other marginal groups when identifying neighbourhood problems, and the fragmentation of place-based ‘communities’ along the lines of perceived (religious and cultural) difference. Politicians and policy-makers thus need to recognise the challenges to collaboration posed by ‘super-diversity’ and rapid social change for residents living in areas of new migration. It may be unrealistic to expect groups from diverse backgrounds, with differing housing needs and aspirations and varying commitments to the local area, to agree on neighbourhood priorities and collaborate fully on local issues.

Our research across the three areas of new migration in Bradford suggests that a sense of security, fairness, trust, a stake in the neighbourhood, and feelings of belonging are all central to building shared understandings between residents. Oppenheim, *et al.* (2010) suggest that where these do not exist, ‘communities can become inward-looking and unresponsive to consultation, engagement or other interventions, treating strangers – including public agencies and other offers of support – with hostility’. Whenever people perceive new immigration to be impacting on their life chances and well-being, resentment rises, local tensions are heightened, new immigrants become the targets of abuse and harassment, and trust between groups is compromised. Suspicion and animosities were all too evident in some of our local consultations and community forums. These tensions, in part, reflect the failure of



government to step in and actively assist affected areas. The far-right has proved ready and willing to seize the initiative and secure rich political capital by actively propagating myths about new immigrants gaining access to scarce resources at the expense of British citizens. It is naive to assume that in such circumstances, when people are already struggling with the consequences of economic decline and public service cuts, the 'Big Society' notion of achieving fairness and opportunity for all through people being given more power and taking more responsibility has much chance of winning through.

The evidence from our research has several policy implications. At the local level:

- Interactive community forums can offer a form of engagement which moves beyond the 'contact hypothesis' underpinning many community cohesion initiatives by providing opportunities for learning, understanding and negotiation of differences. Support is needed to build on settled residents' perceptions of commonalities between themselves and newcomers, and on their suggestions for inter-cultural initiatives.
- The potential for successful and inclusive local collaboration in the running of local affairs may well be undermined by diversity, animosity and perceptions of difference in neighbourhoods experiencing rapid social change through new migration. Groundwork with people living in these areas may well be needed if a shared understanding between new and settled residents about the root of local problems and mutually acceptable solutions is to be developed, and the exclusion of marginalised groups' interests is to be avoided. Community-based forums could well play a part in this process if embedded within a wider strategic partnership programme to manage neighbourhood change and promote community cohesion. This requires strong local leadership and capacity building for agencies and community-based organisations involved in providing support, negotiating real and perceived differences between groups, mediating grievances, and brokering communication between groups.
- Support is needed for frontline workers, such as neighbourhood wardens and trusted community members, who can act as agents of change. These individuals can play a valuable role in helping to build the trust that is central to collaboration by negotiating everyday misunderstandings, tensions and incivilities between new and settled residents in areas of new migration.
- Support and advice is also needed for vulnerable groups that feel marginalised and excluded by harassment and intimidation, such as Bradford's Czech and Slovak Roma.

At the national scale, the entrenched discourse in the UK about the motives and actions of new immigrants needs to be challenged. The local impacts of migration need to be recognised, without retreating into familiar stereotypes about immigrants as skilled players of the generosity of the British welfare state and scare stories about cultural loss, and these effects need to be actively managed. Meeting this challenge demands government attention. In the absence of effective support, local communities will be abandoned to manage the challenges posed by new immigration alone.

## Figure 4: Forum engagement – positive evaluations

*They had their opinion on us, we had our opinion on them and we sat down at the table. They were listening to us and we were listening to them.*

Eastern European woman, Gillingham discussion forum

*It was good 'cause we were all sat together, talking together. Everybody was taking it seriously. Nobody was taking the mick out of it.*

Young Eastern European man, West Bowling photo forum

*Everyone could say what they think ... because it was the first time I have been together at the table with Asian lads.*

Young Eastern European man, West Bowling photo forum

*When they were saying something we listened and when we were saying something they listened ... we discussed it together.*

Young Asian man, West Bowling photo forum

*Good because we could get our point across, they could say what was on their mind, some of the points were similar so we were talking about the same issues. We didn't have any argument. Everyone was calm.*

Eastern European woman, West Bowling discussion forum

*We never meet Pakistani women because we are always at home – so it was a good idea ... I think they took on board what we said ... I took them seriously.*

Eastern European woman, West Bowling discussion forum

*It was really friendly. I really enjoyed being there, everyone was just relaxed and just expressing themselves and how they felt about the area and their housing.*

Asian woman, West Bowling discussion forum

*I think the forum's a good way to break out what's actually happening with a community and let other people in the community know.*

Asian woman, West Bowling discussion forum

*I thought it was a good way 'cause ... I haven't sat down and spoken to any Eastern Europeans ... it was enlightening, it was an eye opener ... Everyone got to speak and say what they felt.*

Black woman, West Bowling discussion forum

*Everybody could actually have their own opinion and everybody was asked. And I thought that was a good thing was that ... I'm involved with the community, we got a lot of feedback from that ... it helps us with what we're trying to do here. We talked about it afterwards ... it opened our eyes ...*

White man, Allerton/Lower Grange discussion forum

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# Appendix I

## Forum entry questionnaire

This questionnaire was presented as a wall poster.

### MY NEIGHBOURHOOD

	Agree	Disagree
Private landlords in this area provide a good service for local people		
My neighbourhood is a good area to live in		
Everyone has an equal chance of renting from the council or a housing association		
Different communities keep themselves to themselves		
My neighbourhood is a safe place to live		
Anti-social behaviour is a problem in my neighbourhood		



# Appendix II

## Forum exit questionnaire

### BUILDING SHARED VISIONS OF HOUSING FUTURES IN BRADFORD

Interactive discussion forum in .....

#### Individual exit questionnaire

Participant number/name .....

1. Have your views of any local housing and neighbourhood issues changed as a result the discussion in the forum? How?
2. Do you think that you understand other people's day to day experiences of the neighbourhood any better than before, or about the same/less? In what way?
3. Were you surprised by any of the results of the voting? Why?

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